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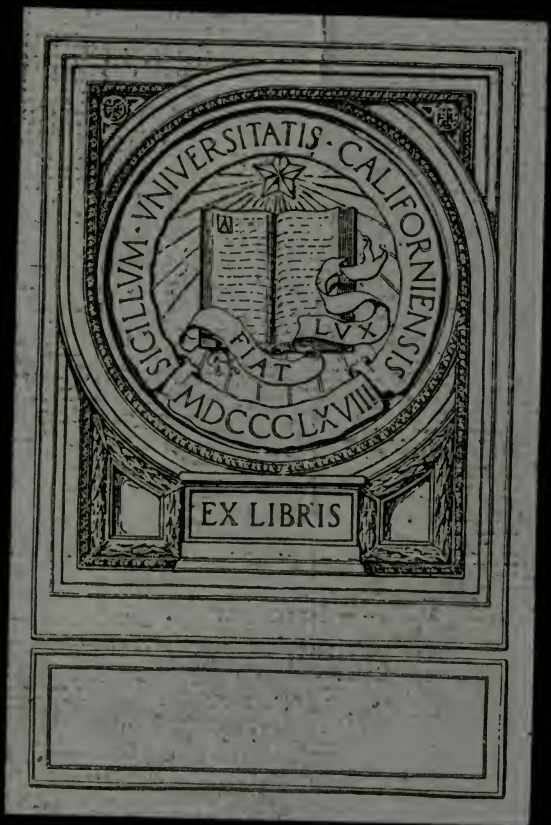
THE MASTERS OF GENRE PAINTING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From Watteau's 'Embarquement pour Cythère'

THE

MASTERS OF GENRE PAINTING

BEING

AN INTRODUCTORY HANDBOOK TO THE STUDY OF GENRE PAINTING

BY

FREDERICK WEDMORE

With Sixteen Illustrations

LONDON
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1880

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NOTE.

In trying to tell the story of Genre Painting as it is found in the lives and works of the greater masters, it has seemed not amiss to pass somewhat lightly over what has already been satisfactorily written of, and to concentrate attention if that may be, on artists of whom English criticism has had little to say. I have thought it chiefly waste of time to dwell in detail on the work of Hogarth, but very necessary to insist upon the excellence of Jan Steen and of Watteau.

The lives and characters of Genre Painters, wherever we may really know them, are likely to have an interest intimately mixed with our interest in the painters' work. To have chosen, as the occupation of their art, neither the features of inanimate Nature as men see them in landscape, nor the progress of the august events which make up History, nor the embodiment of

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visions and hopes of the Future, but the things of daily happening—homely and common experiences revealed to their keenest observation—is certainly some evidence of their own capacity for life, of their own closest contact with its pains and pleasures; and such capacity for life, such contact with its pains and pleasures, makes the foundation of the interest of biography. Some glimpses of the personal career may obviously do much towards interpreting the spirit of men's work. Glimpses, therefore, I have often tried to get.

In a book on Genre Painters I have dared to include much mention of Rembrandt, not only because many of Rembrandt's pictures and etchings—the so-called "fancy subjects" and others not so called—properly belong to Genre, but because Rembrandt was in a large sense the head and front of a whole school of Genre in Holland, whose work can hardly be rightly thought of when it is thought of quite apart from the work and influence of the master.

A word as to the illustrations here introduced. They are not elaborate reproductions. They are, I hope, accurate memoranda—plain records of just the things which in my narrative seemed most to demand

to be illustrated. For the fair appreciation of completed work we must go to the completed work itself: I have seen no popular reproductions which can quite honestly profess to take the place of it. But it seemed to me that designs like M. Tiburce de Mare's would greatly aid an endeavour to put before the reader perhaps some habitual characteristic, perhaps some surprise, of the painter written about—to show, say, how profoundly Metsu had studied delicate gesture or subtle expression; how Jan Steen could give now and then an almost antique dignity of attitude to the housewives of Holland, and still be honest and true; how Watteau, skilled in the motions of sprightly youth and piquant attire, had at his sure command a power of noble draughtsmanship of the nude figure generally unsuspected in his work.

F. W.

London: *October* 1879.

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THE MASTERS OF GENRE PAINTING

GENRE PAINTING.

The art of Genre painting has for its first and plainest characteristic that it deals with the actual and the common world, and by its aspirations as well as its achievements belongs to that common world and to no other. Genre painting, like the fascinating heroine of Wordsworth—his truest ideal, after all, just because his sweetest and most living reality—claims only, first and last, to be

> not too bright and good
> For human nature's daily food.

It records the struggles, the character, the happiness, the folly of men. It has in it what interests the intelligent curiosity of common folk. And, like the intimate studies of our greatest fiction, it is itself history, and itself analysis. It records, not the rare events which stated history chronicles, but the repeated incidents which we know to be events too. It quickens our senses to the spectacle, in actual life, not of a sensation scene, but of an every-day drama.

And the great Genre painters have been the ones to see that it is the every-day drama, after all, which must have our closest concern—the personal experience, the habitual task, this or that love or liking. Life itself, or at all events the life of most of us, is a success or a failure according to the very closeness with which we lay hold on the incident or occasion of the hour: according as, by the power born or bred within us, we grasp truly or falsely the relations of passing things. But to grasp justly, we must observe keenly. The great Genre painters and the artists of analytic fiction have done a part of our observing for us—as much as they could. Other gifted persons soared and dreamed; but these—their feet were very firm on the actual world.

Perhaps it might have been natural to reward with an equal fame those who in ways however different were working so much to a common end—the furtherance of our knowledge of life and living character. But the honour which criticism has allowed so justly to such workers in the art of literature, it has latterly in England been minded to deny to such workers in the art of painting. It may be, indeed, that for the telling a particular message, for the expression of a particular order of thought, the language of the one art is fitted more finely than

that of the other. But if some of the truths of character and comedy are presented more easily in writing than in the arts of design, there are some also which the writer must at best labour heavily to present, while the skilled draughtsman or painter can tell them with his lightest touch.* This theme perhaps may be proper to the literature of fiction: that to painting. But many at least are within the rights of both—to be dealt with necessarily under different conditions. The painters are few who have grappled successfully with the unfolding of a narrative, and there are not many writers who in the vivid presentation of incident have had a painter's success. But both hold sway over the realm of character: character formed and constant, or its lightest and most fleeting phase. For both there are the accidents of human feeling, and the droll or serious chances of changing circumstance.

Perhaps then, there is no substantial reason to be found why, with the honour bestowed on the Genre that is written, a comparative dishonour should rest on the Genre that is only painted. But there are reasonable explanations. The personal predilections

* Fielding touches this matter, in his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, "The Monstrous," he urges, "is much easier to paint than describe, and the Ridiculous to describe than paint."

of influential men must have counted for much: and they have counted for most in matters of Art, with which the great public has been little concerned. The public voice has been little heard in questions of painting: it has been able to dictate in questions of literature. And there too, in Art, where the preferences of influential men have counted for most, there has been the least, perhaps, of critical shrewdness. The feeling and the sentiment of genius have usurped the office of criticism; and genius has soared generally above the aims of the genre painter. At one time Diderot and at another Hazlitt and Lamb had much to say for the painter of humble romance and of character and of society, but the philosophy of the Encyclopedist, so far as it dealt with Art, had until these last years of all in France been overpowered by the tremendous enthusiasm of Ingres for the Antique, and it is no matter of surprise that Hazlitt and Lamb, with their limited knowledge of Art and their very thoughts of it scattered and occasional, should have made, in our day, small stand with the body of their doctrine, against the splendid concentration of the critic and poet who revealed Turner.

And yet, wherever Genre painting of even moderate skill has been seen by those who have little

prejudice because they have no prepossession, it has been liked and looked at, whether it has been of the order that rose and was perfected in a single generation among the artists of Holland, in their unique period of manifold excellence, and was somewhat valued by the bourgeois even then, or of the order that gave pleasure to the great and gentle in the France of Louis XV.,—to the restricted class, who cared for Art delicately—or of the kind that the citizen of London found piquant in the designs of Hogarth and that the Academy of 1878 displayed in its glittering decadence. And people too, not at all insensible, one hopes, to the serene beauty and grandeur of the art more purely imaginative—of the art that has best concerned itself with the union of high thought and noble form—have turned at times a little gratefully, and with no sense of necessary fall, to the keen or gracious work of the Genre painters. It is not always, in the realm of music, that wise men want to listen while "Beethoven's Titan mace"

Smites the immense to storm.

Mozart and Schubert have also their most proper ministries. And in the art of painting, likewise, there is place for the lighter and more gracious strains.

Genre painting has flourished most in compact and settled and highly civilised societies, not so large as to be very various, and at times when men's minds were little distracted either by political movement or religious aspiration. For the Genre painter has needed, both in himself and in those for whom he has wrought, some sense of the immediate and ultimate importance of the themes he deals with. Other men, other generations, may be pleased to style him trivial; but he, to see clearly and to chronicle well, must believe in the value and the interest of his work. No overpowering thought of larger issues —of a future, of another world, of a different society—must hang over him as he records our moods and manners and gains his revelation into permanent character by the accidents of the passing minute. Somewhat conservative therefore, and on the whole content with itself, with its fortunes, with its daily ways, must be the society that offers to the artist of character and comedy his most favourable occasion. Such was the bourgeois society of Holland, in which Genre, the most realistic and veracious, reached perfection at a period when internal trouble was wellnigh over for the State. And such as far as social, not political, order is concerned, was the staid and quiet world of our earlier Georges; and

such too the lighter society of France, the society of the court and the capital, which saw with delight the art of the Genre painter occupying itself with themes romantic and luxurious. The Revolution was the death of Genre painting. Society was scattered, exquisite manners gone, and Art was called upon to be heroic.

Yes, and even in lands and times which had no powerful and special school of Genre painting that we can recognise to-day, the art breaks out the best where there is the least of public pre-occupation with questions of politics or pursuits of theology. Free gesture and manners vivacious and varied, among the people to be pourtrayed, are aids, almost necessities, to the artist in Genre, and the slow gait and relatively inflexible visage of the Teuton, must count for something in the comparative absence of Genre among the Germans. But here and there in Germany, and in the hands of artists who were themselves possessed of rich capacity for physical life, it does break out in some among the subjects say, of the Little Masters: in certain prints by the Behams, for instance: chief in this wise among the company of Seven. Here and there there is a touch of comedy —character caught by the wayside, as this or that peasant or humble citizen goes onward on his path.

Here and there a romance: the fascination of sex, the passion of love, reduced to their simplest expressions, as in the *Embrace*, a little plate shorn of the common exaltations of classical mythology, pretending to no dignity and no tradition, but charged with the realities of intimate life.

And what is it but Genre, breaking out, in forms poetical, courteous, and southern, in some among the paintings of the great Secular school of Italy, the school of Venice? It is true that the comedy of manners, the separate study of character apart from portraiture, was unknown to the Italians. But Giorgione and his fellows and followers live and speak to us to-day, in their rare works, partly in virtue of that art of theirs of carrying their poetry of selected form and august colour into the pourtrayal of scenes that were scenes of daily life to the Venetian: the music party in the garden; the courtyard's rest and silence. What they lacked in variety of characterisation, in the sense of comedy, they atoned for, if atonement was necessary, by the pure beauty of their work and its nobility. It may be that they painted passing pleasure, but, with humanity so organised, ordinary pleasure was extraordinary joy: it was profound and intense. And what is it again but the noble kind of Genre painting, when Bonifazio

takes such a Bible theme as the passing of Lazarus before the feasting of Dives? Is Lazarus of a type we should desire; and does Dives sit self-condemned as a glutton of the East? Why no great feast is spread; only there is the daintiness of ripened fruits and draughts of wine in the evening light, and Dives, a comely and portly Venetian, rich in the experience of past pleasure and the expectation of more—richest in the refined luxury of that hour and place—sits happily and thoughtfully, looking at fair faces and listening to the words they say or sing. Later than Bonifazio there came a poorer man—Tiepolo. More than once there was need, even in Venetian art, for the work that records no heroic deeds nor distant aspirations, but the personal life, the vivid impression, the joys that men were born to, the sorrows even of no exceptional souls nor of strange fortunes; the record of habitual and familiar hours.

But the art of Genre—the painting of character and incident—is first clearly shaped and recognised in the seventeenth century in Holland. Afterwards, much modified, varied, extended even in its aim—less purely naturalistic—it counts for its own nearly all that is good or evil in French design for almost eighty years; and during that time some other modification of it, due to his own peculiar genius, gives

us in England the work of Hogarth. Wilkie, the elder Leslie—Mulready perhaps—close its history, so far as the criticism of our day is able fairly to judge it. And the interest of its history does not lie in the study of the development of one given system—the concern of the pedant, wherever it may be found,—but in the study of the minds of many men. How did these various men look at life and touch it? What struck them? What did they express?

REMBRANDT.

1607—1669.

REMBRANDT has had many biographers, and they have disagreed about him. Investigation among the archives open only lately to the carefulness of modern research appears to show that he was born on the 15th of July, 1607, and shows unmistakably that he died at Amsterdam with fair amount of bourgeois comfort, and not at Stockholm miserably, in the first days of October, 1669. The son of a miller, he first saw the day in the city of Leyden, and not outside it, as the story went, in any mill like the famous one that he has etched. His parents were well-to-do folk of the good Dutch middle class—careful people with property here and there—people with the dignity of real estate—the mother, as Rembrandt's portraits show her, a fascinating compound of vivacity and shrewdness, goodnature and vanity: a many-sided woman from whom a man may well inherit a keen capacity for life, the power of action and of enjoying action, a great and irrepressible vitality.

They sent Rembrandt to college at Leyden: the city of his birth was the second in Holland at that time, and its university celebrated. But the passion for Art showed itself. His brothers were in commerce: he, having the gift, might reasonably be a painter: so, after some insignificant teaching in Leyden, he went to Amsterdam, and there, but for six months only, was a pupil of Lastmann—to most of us a man of unfamiliar name but to Rembrandt's latest and most complete biographer, M. Vosmaer, a painter of substantial merit and in a style that had its influence on Rembrandt's own. Then he returned to Leyden, and in 1627 we have his first dated work—a small oil picture of *S. Paul in Prison*,* notable, it seems, for careful and minute execution, and interesting as showing that he began his art with that human and natural and secular rendering of sacred things which he carried out to the end of it. Only one year afterwards—in 1628—begins the series of dated etchings with a portrait of his mother, 'lightly etched,'—as Wilson correctly describes it: so great a masterpiece already that nothing in his art is more astonishing than that early success. This too has fellowship with the painting in its careful and minute execution—but the minutest line is deli-

* In the Museum of Stuttgart.

cately expressive, and whether Rembrandt's style be delicate or sweeping, pettiness has no place in his work.

He settled in Amsterdam in 1630,—a painter already of growing fame—and in Leyden his time had not been lost. There, in some proof of the mark he had already made, there had come to him before his departure, a lad of fifteen, Gerard Dou, the first of his pupils. But there seems to be no record of any association of his with the man at that time at the head of the artistic society of Leyden, Jan Van Goijen, the landscape painter, with whose art, Rembrandt's, in those early days, had little in common. Landscape did not in those first years fascinate Rembrandt. His interest was in men, and, with the means of journeying probably within his reach, it is noteworthy that there did not come upon him as upon so many of a day only a little later, the desire of travel—the yearning for Italy. He settled in Amsterdam, at twenty-four: sure already to find profitable service in fixing upon canvas no fleeting beauty of maiden or child, but those stern burgher faces, laden with thought and with past toil, which even then charmed and impressed him more strongly than any other thing he saw in the bounded city streets or under the far-reaching skies—skies, we remember, that

stretched like a grey canopy over those flats of field, canal, and foot-bridge, which formed the landscape of his youth, and, touched by a magic hand, passed long afterwards into the landscape of his art.

In Amsterdam he gradually took his place in the best burgher society—rich, pious, and intellectual—helped thereto, no doubt, by his marriage in 1634 with Saskia Uijlenburgh, the young cousin of a famous preacher, Jan Sylvius (we have his portrait by Rembrandt). The marriage was entirely a wise one, and Saskia is the bright figure of Rembrandt's early manhood. Her face, glowing with health and intellect—a face of grave affection and vivacious thought—is in many places of his work. We see her in her physical splendour, idealised, it may be a little, in the so-called *Jewish Bride*: a stray sketch on a plate catches her features in a moment of refined meditation: elsewhere, happy and proud, she heads her table: afterwards, if we receive the conjecture of the latest criticism, these are again her features, sharpened and drawn with pain, her eyes with the steady and far-seeing gaze of one for whom the certainty of death has succeeded the vague languor of illness—warning has followed warning not to be put aside, and there has entered into her mind the sad but resolute acceptance of

the final things. She died in 1642—eight years after her marriage—her one son, Titus, a child then twelve months old.

About this time Rembrandt was much occupied with landscape, and I should like to accept Mr. Seymour Haden's theory that he went into the country, to Jan Six's place, to console himself for Saskia's loss. But what Mr. Haden, in that vigorous and vivacious monograph, *The Etched Work of Rembrandt*, calls "the singular preponderance of landscape" in the etchings of this period is hardly, it would seem to me, to be so accounted for. The Burgomaster Six was at that time very young. He was still young, five years afterwards, when Rembrandt etched his portrait. Is there any direct evidence that the two men were acquainted at the time of Saskia's death?—both the etched and the painted portrait being many years later. Again, the popular *chef-d'œuvre* of Rembrandt, the *Company of Captain Francis Banning Cock* (called the *Night Watch*) was finished in the year of Saskia's death: it may have been of course before the actual day of it: but, even if this be so, there is no perceptible break. Some other pictures in the same year, and three indecent etchings out of only seven that Rembrandt ever allowed himself to make: in the next year,

several compositions and several famous portraits—no sign of banishment or seclusion. And yet if Mr. Haden's theory on this matter is entirely right, the comparative seclusion stretched over several years, for the dates on the etched landscapes stretch over several years—the *Cottage with the White Pales*, 1642; *The Three Trees*, 1643; *Six's Bridge*, 1645; and these two have been preceded by the distant view of *Amsterdam*, 1641; and the *Cottage and Dutch Haybarn*, 1641; and are followed by the *Orchard with a Barn*, 1648; and the *Village near the High Road*, 1650. For ten years of his middle period Rembrandt worked upon landscape. Some of his finest work in it was done while Saskia lived, and to connect this mass of it with her death—as work done by him in periods of rest and seclusion—is a pretty fancy that is hardly proved to be a true one.

Rembrandt—however he took this great and sad experience that had befallen him—Rembrandt a widower, was again busy with Society and Art, and with both in their most various forms, for his own life and art were reaching then their fullest and amplest capacity. His nature was developed on many sides: his friendships and associations were of many kinds. With feeling, with control of feeling, with a wide vision, with many experiences, he looked life, we may

be sure, very hard in the face, and accepted facts wherever he found them. He is a little Bohemian. The habits of his home, the hour and quality even of his meals, vary from day to day. Now gorgeously arrayed in garments he has painted for us, he has a banquet with a famous citizen; now humbly he eats a herring and some cheese alone. These are the old stories. And so we are told by those —his early biographers—who understand one side only of wide and various character, that his nature was low, his ways stingy, the god of his idolatry money. And yet contemporary record asserts of Rembrandt, that when he went into a sale-room he would pay more than the richest for precious work of the engraver's art. He caught up eagerly his Lucas Van Leydens. He had long found out that the art work we really study and know is the art work that belongs to us, for that speaks to us in many moods, and unexpected and unawares. He was an enthusiastic collector of beautiful things. Inventories show him to have been possessed of paintings by men as widely divided as Brauwer and Van Eyck. He had remembrances of Titian, "the precious book" of Andrea Mantegna—probably his original engravings—a collection of prints "after Raphael," which in all likelihood were Marc Antonios. He had a

hundred objects of decoration. Armour, casts, Venetian glass of the good time, rare porcelains, surrounded him as he worked. That is how we like to think of him.

There came, at last, a break in his prosperity: some change in the fashion of the day no longer allowed him to be selected for remunerative public work. Lievens and Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, his contemporaries, even his pupils, had known how to acquire for a time a reputation that injured his own. He abandoned his old large house in the Breestraat, near S. Anthony's Bridge, and had to separate himself from his cherished possessions.

In 1653 he is borrowing money in one place; in 1654 he is borrowing it in another; and in 1656 his affairs, now hopelessly disordered, are placed in liquidation. What is the cause of this disaster? Amsterdam itself, in these very years, is passing through a long commercial crisis. Incomes diminish, some hundreds of houses lie unoccupied; many luxuries are abandoned and expenses curtailed: it is proposed that the Hôtel de Ville—building at that moment—shall go without its topmost storey. There are many suggestions, many explanations as to the way in which Rembrandt's fortunes were dragged down. Saskia, it is known, had had money and had

left the use of it to her husband. Titus was to have it at Rembrandt's death, or, if Rembrandt married a second time, this money was to be the boy's immediate portion. Now, what is the history? In spite of scandal about Rembrandt in the year 1654—which some have sought to connect with a second marriage—it appears certain* that no second marriage took place till after the time of his calamities. There seems some reason to think, that, perhaps at the suggestion of Saskia's relatives, he had pledged himself to assign to Titus money for his support. Ready money, never very abundant with him, was getting more than usually scarce; but whether, when the crash came, the interest specially endangered, the claim pressing for settlement, was that of Titus's trustees or of Rembrandt's business creditors, it is not, with the newest complication of narratives, easy to say. With Titus himself, his father remained on the best of terms. Friends of his own claimed formally for Titus, in 1665, the right to administer his own affairs, and Titus—half an artist, half a dealer seemingly—was in part occupied, if we may believe Houbraken, with commerce in his father's etchings. Who was it that pressed upon Rembrandt? That cannot be known. Why did not his friends help him? We hear in

* M. Vosmaer declares it in his latest Edition.

subsequent years of their continued intimacy, and I suppose they did help him privately, but let these business matters take their course. Their course was a long one. In 1656, after some times of growing difficulty, the great man is declared bankrupt: in 1657 they sell much of his property: in 1658, his prints and drawings.

How does he pass through this period, and what is his work? It is among the finest and strongest of all his life: in 1656, the great etched portrait of *Lutma*: in the same year, it is hardly to be doubted, the etched portrait of *Old Haaring*, and his great masterpiece of painted portraiture the *Burgomaster Six*, now in the house of Six's descendant, in the Herrengracht—in the Park Lane of Amsterdam. And from that point, as far as the quality of his own work is concerned, all is still well. The art of Rembrandt has hardly a perceptible decline. For his old age there are reserved no colossal failures.

But the troubles of that late middle period, leaving his art great as ever, are not without effect upon his face. We may trace this, and it is interesting to trace it; not difficult either, for no painter painted himself so much as Rembrandt: none has given us the same opportunity to study and know him. That

was owing, we may be sure, by no means to vanity, for no one could possibly have flattered himself less. But he knew that his face was full of character, and moreover he had that note of a true artist, that he was continually fascinated by the near and the familiar, wringing out of it fresh variations, sometimes only delicately different, but seeing in the hourly expressions, gestures, turns of head and hand, a thousand differences where most of us, until he painted them, should have seen but a few. And thus it is that we have so many portraits of Rembrandt—paintings and prints to be counted not on the fingers but counted by the score: an unaffected smile of youth round his features in an early etching: some years later he, 'subtly of himself contemplative,' leans at his ease against a window-sill; now stands erect with drawn sabre and ready eyes; now, a burgher in furred cloak, ponders heavily; now some joke or story summons a broad grin to the wrinkled and baggy face; again, with hand on hilt of sword he is magnificent in meditation; and here, with plainest workday raiment, a keen plain searching face looks up at you from the drawing board. It is not sentiment, it is not deep feeling, that is often on the countenance, but the signs of jests to be laughed at, or knotty points to be considered, or

the moment's work to be done with a will. The meditation of one exquisite etching, *Rembrandt Leaning on a Stone Sill*, is dreamy and poetical, and so is an exception; but it is to a painted portrait of the eventful year 1658—the latest, one hopes, of his long misfortunes—that we must go for no assumed or temporary pathos or occasional brooding, but for the record of character, saddened and elevated by a more grave experience—it is in the Belvedere Gallery at Vienna.

We see Rembrandt established in his elder years in another dwelling, in a suburb. The Rosengracht, scarcely an aristocratic, is at least a substantial quarter. There his friends come to him, still a goodly company and representative of much of the intellectual activity of Amsterdam. Bol and Flinck, artists of a more abounding prosperity; Philippe de Koninck, Clément de Jonghe, one fancies, with his keen spirit (as in Rembrandt's etching), struggling with decrepitude and growing age; Coppenol, the writing master; Abraham Francen, the amateur of whom the story goes that there was never an end to the self-denials he practised so only that he might possess art-treasures which he loved; Lutma the goldsmith—a Cellini almost, of Amsterdam—in his last days garrulous of distant journeyings—for he

had been to Rome and had brought back fine things of Marc Antonios; finally, the Burgomaster Six, who had married a daughter of Tulp—the operating surgeon of Rembrandt's early *chef-d'œuvre.* The Burgomaster was faithful, let us believe, to Rembrandt during life, though there exists record that after Rembrandt's death, Six bestowed all his admiration on the art of Italy. For family, there was the son Titus, the wife Catherina Van Wijck, the circumstances of whose marriage with Rembrandt in these his last years must now for ever, it is probable, remain a mystery.

The end approaches of his uneventful story—a story so humble in comparison with that of those who were almost his contemporaries: Rubens, who travelled with the secrets of diplomacy and statecraft: Vandyck, who was the favourite of a king. Rembrandt, we see, was from first to last either bourgeois or Bohemian: of the middle class always. The end approaches, and as Rembrandt's wife—the wife we know, Saskia, the bright figure of his youth—and Rembrandt's mother had died in the same year, so not quite a twelvemonth separates the death of Titus, Rembrandt's son, from the death of Rembrandt. Our last chronicles are scanty. Titus, married in 1668, and established at the sign of the

Golden Scales on the east side of Amsterdam, dies that very year, in September. Rembrandt is present in March 1669 at the baptism of a grandchild, Titus's posthumous son. Half a year afterwards the registry of the Westerkirk contains the entry of the painter's death. They buried him on the 8th of October: some few florins, as the accounts show us, being paid for his funeral. . . . A man of whom our time recks nothing, but accounted great in his own, had been buried in that city with the honours of publicity: a laurel wreath placed on his coffin. Vondel, the Dutch poet of that age, sang over Rembrandt's contemporaries, but Rembrandt, the great artist, passed away in a silence much in keeping with the gathering dullness of his public life in those last years of occupation gone—with the giving of the applause to second rate talents, with which he had nothing in common—with the indifference of the world of his own later days to his stupendous work.

His work we divide, as painter's work does so often come to be divided, into three periods; but here such division as must needs be made is more to signify change, to classify variety, than to mark the too habitual stages of growth, ripeness, and decline. We may take three great pictures as typical of the three periods: round one or other of them may cluster, as it

were, most of the rest; and the first is the *Lesson of Anatomy*. That is the picture of Tulp the eminent operator standing with earnest mind and delicate hand over the dead subject; lecturing on the dead arm his dissecting scissors have opened, while near him there presses a group of heads eager to watch and to listen. The thing was painted for the College of Surgeons, and is an assemblage of bespoken portraits, but so grouped that it makes, as even one rough line of description proves, a picture of incident. But the incident itself of which so adroit a use has been made, Rembrandt was not the first to appropriate. 'Lessons of Anatomy' were by no means uncommon subjects with the Dutch School; most of the pictures, however, of which these were the themes were produced in the very early part of the great seventeenth century. It did not remain for Rembrandt to invent; it did remain for him so to use the theme that no one after him could follow him in it without predestined defeat. In Rembrandt's canvas—on that large canvas at the Hague—a stunted and common figure lies out for exposition; the arrested expression of death being so awfully there, on ashy face and set grey hands. The Morgue itself—where, whenever we may chance to go, some stranger, some miserable, some unknown, who most abhorred his life in Paris

yesterday, is sure to be stretched out—is not more impressive, and (for I felt constrained to take the opportunity of the comparison) is hardly more real. That, with all its horror, is Rembrandt's achievement and no other's. No other painter, painting death, on the canvasses of Spain or Italy—the Deposition, the Entombment—is as true as that. Beside that, Ribera with his crude blacks and whites is vulgarly sensational, and the great Mantegna himself chiefly ingenious in weird expression of torture. But it is Rembrandt's triumph—his triumph in years so early that he was not six-and-twenty—that over all this terrible reality of the dead, the reality of the living is victorious, and our final impression of his picture is not of the stunted corpse, but of the activity of vigour and intellect in the lecturing surgeon and pressing crowd.

That is of 1632. The second picture is the *Night Watch*, which is not a night watch at all, but a scene of golden sunlight: the Sortie of the company of Francis Banning Cock. It is of 1641. Much has it been praised, but yet the great canvas, filling a wall-side in the Museum of Amsterdam, may interest far less than many a simpler theme—than many a single face caught in some quiet moment in which its lines record in silence the character of

a life and its sufferings, its order of pleasures, its humble fortunes. Some of these things we shall see when we come to speak of the portraits. But of manual skill, of dexterous arrangement, of the struggle with complicated painter's problems which the painter has actually courted, and not always solved, this picture is no doubt a typical example. Far are we here from the minute and chiefly patient work of the *S. Paul in Prison*, and of the *Simeon* of a Dutch Gallery. The *Lesson of Anatomy* was already ahead of these. But when he painted the *Lesson of Anatomy*, Rembrandt had not set himself to the grappling with a score of various movements, with the coming and going of crowds. And his effects of light, in the *Lesson of Anatomy*, were broad and simple, and his colour restrained and limited; while here in the *Sortie of Franz Banning Cock's Company* on this great wall-side at Amsterdam, amidst the bustle of the Sortie, lights flash on unsuspected points, half-lights rest on broader spaces, brown, amber and red; one shadow is impenetrable and another luminous; the gold of the sunshine, the coloured air of Holland, is diffused over all. Out of it, as it were, figures advance; behind it, figures recede: it glows, a golden brown, on their soberer raiments, or flashes

on sword. And yet our praise is cold; the thing is brilliant, but theatrical and forced.

In the third picture, painted just twenty years afterwards—and the last of Rembrandt's great ones—there is no decline; but rather, as I think, a soberer and more enduring triumph. Again, like that early but immense achievement, the *Lesson of Anatomy*, it is a portrait-group: the *Syndics of the Cloth Hall.* Again, like the *Lesson of Anatomy*, and, as I think, unlike the *Sortie*, no want of high interest in the individuals represented leaves the picture of lower intellectual worth. The scene is a dimly illumined room; faces, in some stronger light to the foreground, gather round a table to discuss affairs: behind the five grave men seated in committee, stands an attendant: a pale and secondary background light falls slanting from the left on the angle of wainscoted wall, shifts along the brown room-side, past dark recess and corner. The figures are life size, but the picture can well be smaller than the *Sortie*, with its complicated crowd; and as even this word has indicated, it is far simpler in arrangement. But its sober harmony of tone, ranging from the almost black of burghers' hats, through brown of wainscot and wall, and low red of tablecloth, to the whiteish amber of coat and collar, is

splendid and unbroken, and in magnificent accord with these gathered and grave faces occupied with weighty concerns. Nor has painter's art ever gone further in expressing, with so much of similarity in material, different individualities bent on a common purpose. Various the expressions are, but not too various for that common end; for theirs, in one work in a quiet chamber, cannot be the variety of the unconnected figures, the chance faces, of the street crowd. And so our last impression is still of a grave harmony of colour, group, and thought.

We touch here on the portraits. No one who has been to Holland and seen the sober and occupied faces of its business and professional men, with intelligence deep rather than quick, will doubt that if the finest models of physical form were lacking to Rembrandt, the finest models of intellectual expression were abundantly before him—not indeed the intellectual expression of dreamer or recluse, but of faces whose lines have been traced and deepened by the experience of men—of women—of the world. Of course they were also before his fellows—these fine models of human expression—in a land which allowed itself the luxury of no idle class, and some of his fellows—Frans Hals, Theodore de Kaiser, and Van Loon—as pictures in Holland alone can pro-

perly show us, used the occasion nobly; but Rembrandt, as paintings and etchings alike prove, was unapproached in his rendering of the mind and the past life in the face. Of those artists, essentially portrait painters, who have made that their business—to render the mind and that past life which has made the face what now it is—Rembrandt is as completely the chief as Jan Steen is the chief of those artists, essentially painters of comedy, who have made it their business to catch the expression that comes and that fleets. Steen is the most brilliant in retaining the expression that is the result of circumstance; Rembrandt the most profound in recording the character which is the result of a life. Therefore, in drawing these grave faces of the higher burghers of Amsterdam, he came upon worthy material, but knew too how to use it with an art of deepest penetration.

He began portraiture early. One small etched portrait of his mother shows it—the first dated one of that splendid series of original, now almost priceless works, his own through every process from the first scratch on the copper to the final withdrawal of the paper from the press. Occupied very often in painting the portraits of people of no great note—the shipbuilder, say, whom we have seen at Burlington

House, and Daey and his wife in the Van Loon Collection lately dispersed, and scores more difficult now to identify and of less engrossing interest—his etched portraits are more habitually of men whose force of character has brought them to high places in the city life: the Burgomaster Six, a man of influence in action as well as a poet and connoisseur: John Asselyn, a painter of repute; Ephraim Bonus, the famous physician: Sylvius, the preacher; Uytenbogaert, the 'gold-weigher,' Receiver-General to the States of Holland; Clément de Jonghe, the eminent art publisher whose name we read now on many of the prints of that day. His highest types are here,—those faces that he knew the best, cared for the most; save, indeed, those that are constantly recurring: his mother, waning with her gathered years; his wife, from the freshness of girlhood to the pallor of early decay; Rembrandt himself, as I have said before, at all the stages of that changeful life.

We note then a few excellences among a thousand in his etched portraits. We look at the gold-weigher, whom, whether in this case the actual handiwork of the accessories was done by master or pupil, Rembrandt has chosen to put in his own retired office, a place for quiet business and weighty affairs. There are places enough for laziness and laughter; this is

for serious, anxious, yet methodical and ordered toil. See on the table the scales and the ranged money bags; on the floor an iron-bound coffer. To the right, the dull but trusty servant, coarsely etched, and it well may be by some second hand, kneels to take from his master a bag of coin which instantly he will pack in this cask upon the floor, and then he will be off upon his errand. The triumph is the gold-weigher's face, which says, How infinitely precious is that gold-weighted bag; how great must be the care of it! and says also, since that thought is only momentary, says, with that sobriety of complicated expression reached by great players in their subtlest times, says also, how the mind is pre-occupied by many an affair, of moneys still to be dealt with, accounts to finish, business to discharge!

Place by the side of Uytenbogaert the portrait of Lutma, for both have the same dignity. With his back to the window, from which a placid light falls on his age-whitened head, sits Janus Lutma, gold-smith, meditating on his work. By him are the implements of his art, used but a minute since and soon to be resumed. Meanwhile the nervous active hand —an old hand, but subtle yet, and in which ancient skill struggles with age—is gently relaxed, and there is not even the anxiety of a pleasant busy-

ness in the goldsmith's face. For it is a happy and tranquil face; still not unobservant, yet greatly at rest. In the main the work of life is done, and it has prospered: a goodly gift has been well used. There is rest in the thought of past achievements; a kindly smile on the aged mouth, happily garrulous of far away workdays.

But in our admiration of the sentiment and character of this almost unequalled work, let us not forget the technical skill. The play of sunshine, bright and clear, without intensity, throughout the upper half of the picture; the cold, clear stone of the slanting window-sill, *washed*, as it were, with light; the strain of the leather fabric, stretched from post to post of the chair, on either side of the old man's head, which rests against it, and presses it back; the modelling of the bushy eyebrows and short grey beard—these are but some points out of many.

To be closely imitative is not the especial function of etching; and Rembrandt himself is fuller of suggestion than of imitation. He does suggest texture very marvellously: sometimes in the accessories of his portraits, as in the fur of the gold-weigher's raiment, and sometimes in the portraits themselves, as in the long hair of the *Jewish Bride*:—

> Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss;
> Freshness and fragrance; floods of it, too!

The quality of the hair is best observed in the early state of the print. There too the light is natural, the inspiration direct. Thus far the thing has been done at a sitting. In the finished picture the light is a studio light, and the work, while very vigorous and scientific, lacks the particular delightfulness of a sudden transcript from nature and the life.

And Rembrandt's etched portraits are sometimes great in proportion as they are transcripts. It is hardly too much to say of him that in his etched work his labour is often faithful in proportion as it is speedy. To this there are many exceptions in work of painstaking fidelity. The great Ephraim Bonus is one of them—an elaborate portrait of the Jewish physician musing as he descends the stair, and halting with one hand on baluster, as if he were yet undecided as to whether the last word has been said. The two most perfect portraits of his mother, the first very early, the second later, are again instances of an immense and fruitful patience that missed the record of no fact; but the larger work of the later time—the *Clément de Jonghe* notably—is grand, significant, and swift.

Leaving the intricate modellings of earlier years,

the largest, broadest treatment of a portrait subject begins almost in that *Clément de Jonghe* and is continued to the picture of the *Syndics*, the last of the three great landmarks in the work of Rembrandt to which I have asked attention. But there are other landmarks, smaller ones, it may be, and too many to name: among them, as I think, and much related, this etching of Clément de Jonghe, (1651), and the broad, painted portrait, a few years later (1656), of Six the burgomaster—the picture still in the house of the Six family at Amsterdam: nay, the house's glory—of Rembrandt's single portraits, perhaps the greatest of all. From the delicate etching of the same man in his youth—Six at the window—many years divide it, and a total change in work. Here, as in the etching of De Jonghe of five years earlier, are the broad masses of the master's maturest age. What is precisely the subject? It is Six, a middle-aged man, making ready to go out: Six, like De Jonghe, with hat and cloak, and somewhat stooping, and, like De Jonghe, a little weary, a little saddened now with the knowledge that is under the sun; Six, with the colours of hair, face, and garments wrought by the skill of that consummate art into a magnificent harmony; the face reddish-hued, the yellow hair almost orange with tints caught

from the salmon-red cloak, of which a part hangs in a golden shadow; and further draperies of a greenish-grey, low-toned, giving the coolness and the needful rest.

We go back to the etched portraits to note the drawing of the hands, and how they accord with face and life. Mark the fat hands of Renier Ansloo, the stolid Anabaptist minister, and the fine, discerning, discriminating hand of this De Jonghe, the print-seller, a man accustomed to the deft fingering of delicate papers. Mark the nervous, fragile hand of that brooding student-like Haaring the younger. For physical feebleness seen in an old man's hand, note the wavering hand, with the almost shaking head, of Haaring the elder; while for physical strength in an old man's hand—a tenacious hand, sure yet for subtle uses—see the sinewy and craftsman's hand of Lutma. And then the mother's folded hands, with veins swollen: hands supple once, but now in chief locked gently in each other, passive while the mind is still active; old age in the quietude of the habitual chair and the habitual corner, having not yet abandoned interest in the life she was once a part of.

The power that enabled Rembrandt to mark these things, and to mark them with so careful a sym-

pathy—the penetrating vision of the lives and ways of aged, decrepit, and humble—is a power to be reckoned with, is a power sure to assert itself, when he grapples with sacred themes. In the sacred art of Rembrandt there is hardly room for the aspiration of the earlier Florentines—the imagination and the dream. His mind is charged too profoundly with the experience of this present world. It is not for nothing that he has led his life in no seclusion, and has passed daily in and out among the common folk of Amsterdam. There he has met with little of physical beauty; little, at least, of that pure beauty of form which inspires an art removed and exalted. And the worship of the body near and about us, the creed of the Renaissance—exists for him no more than does the worship of the distant and withdrawn—the creed of the Middle Age. It is not reverence for the perfection that is realised, nor for perfection dreamt of, desired and yearned for, that is the mainspring of that art of his which we call Sacred. His art is most sacred when it is most human and humane, when it recognises dignity in present poverty and suffering, and this it does with a pathos which no other art known in the world has ever approached. For it was the last and least familiar lessons of Christianity that Rembrandt had

appropriated to himself, and in his turn could teach —the religion of pity and of an immense tolerance. His Christianity did not recoil from what was physically hideous. He etches many times—though he does not etch so often as old world criticism has supposed—the diverse phases of the lives and sufferings of beggar and hunchback and cripple and leper, as these unfortunates crouch wretchedly in the corners of hovels, or solicit succour or cure, or hide in loneliness their foulness and degradation. In all Art, is it not an unparalleled array? Callot and Murillo have painted the miserable, but in how different a spirit! For Rembrandt their existence is a serious fact in life—he flings you, with his bitter truth, the record of their condition.

And so he enters into sacred themes with an imagination profoundly human and veracious. Were it not for some feeble arrival of attendant spirits from the ceiling, the *Death of the Virgin*, with her piteous gaze, her gesture of the last suffering, might be the death of his own mother. The new pathos of this realistic art surrounds the old and blind Tobit, of the Apocryphal story, as he stumbles to the door. And in the master etching called the *Hundred Guilder Print*—Christ healing the Sick—that which is least realised is the Divine figure. Compassionate

in movement and expression, it is wanting in force, and about it there seems something untrue or insufficient when brought into immediate contact with the well observed reality of the spectators, coarse or shrewd, or with the deeply felt sorrow and helplessness of the maimed and the sick. We note the deficiency, but it must not count too much in a work which as regards the presentment of each man's separate and comprehended trouble is unique in its insight. I should be thankful for the *Hundred Guilder Print*, were it only because of the half-dozen lines in which Rembrandt has etched one figure, to me the central one—a tall man, old and spare, and a little bent, with drooped arms, and hands clasped together in gesture of mild awe and gently felt surprise, as of one from whose slackened vitality the power of *great* surprise or of *very* keen interest has for ever gone. On his face there is the record of much pain—of sufferings not only his own, nor only of the body, but of saddening experiences which have left him quelled and for ever grave.

Rembrandt was a painter of landscape. We should be astonished if we found this man, the very key note of whose character it was that he understood the world about him so keenly and profoundly

that it engrossed his interest and won his sympathy, pursuing as a landscape-painter other ends than those he had sought for in all the rest of his art. And yet in Rembrandt's later years the homely landscape that he drew exclusively, and that was made great alone by his own great qualities of style, was not the landscape of fashion. The Boths had come from Italy, and Berghem was prosperous. A little into the shade had already been thrown that tender and faithful pourtrayal of the common land, which, beginning with Wijnants, was continued in his best moments by Ruisdael and then by Hobbema with scanty encouragement. But Rembrandt, an untravelled man, had no other landscape than that common one to paint, and no other to care for. In some backgrounds of his sacred pictures only, did he verge on ideal composition. Generally he was content to render the footbridge, the windmill, the winding of the canal, or its straighter stretch, the two or three cottages clustered together in the low fields, the grey wide sky, and the distant view of city spires miles away behind the infinite flats. Such changes as there are in his landscape art as time proceeds, are changes in treatment rather than changes of kind, and when they occur they are not unconnected with the progress of his methods in the other

subjects for brush or etching needle. Thus among the earliest of his etchings is the *Cottage with White Pales*, a bit of exquisitely found country; a work showing him already a master in happy selection, but chiefly noticeable for a delicate charm of detail in foreground which in later times he would never have sought for. He passes afterwards not indeed to a nicer selection – for none could be daintier than the first—but to an art larger and more abstract: dealing by preference with wider country and bolder effect, and dealing with them in a manner gradually more summary and decisive. M. Vosmaer, the student of his work for many years and in well nigh every gallery in Europe, insists that Rembrandt's art was quite apart from that of his contemporaries, except Roghman, a master who preceded him, and De Koninck, a pupil who followed. With much respect for his authority, I must still think M. Vosmaer's estimate of the difference to be too wide. But De Koninck, undoubtedly, is nearest to Rembrandt: a lover of wide plains and various distances: both paintings and etchings of the one have been mistaken, and not by the ignorant, for paintings and etchings of the other. The earlier etched landscapes of our master, in the kind of scene they select and the kind of beauty they chronicle,

have perhaps more in common with such landscape art of his day as was familiar and true, than have the landscapes that he painted. But in both he was himself contentedly Dutch, unmoved by the rising fashion, and he is classed for ever with the greatest artists of landscape, both by the etchings that show his virtue of style, his economy of means, his reticence, his rare power of abstraction and choice, and by paintings that attest how much the realm of colour was at need his own. In the one we have the *Cottage and Dutch Haybarn*, the *Cottage with White Pales*; in the other the *Mill* with its glory of sunset.

Such easily satisfied criticism as found voice in England in the beginning of this present century, thought that it recognised the greatest quality in Rembrandt's art when it called him the master of *chiar'oscuro*. It saw that *chiar'oscuro* much pre-occupied Rembrandt,* that he obtained in it effects always striking, sometimes splendid and truthful. But that old world criticism—struck with what it chose to call his 'magic'—did not see the occasional failure as well as the habitual success, though indeed both etchings and paintings have been able to reveal

* See here, as an instance, the *Philosopher* of the Louvre.

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it. That old world criticism would have deemed itself guilty if it had suggested that in that one thing some scholars, some followers of Rembrandt, little valued then, took up, as it were, their leader's unfinished work, and carried it to completion. Triumphs of light and colour to which even Rembrandt was a stranger, were reserved for Nicholas Maes, for Peter de Hooch, and for Van der Meer of Delft.

DE HOOCH AND VAN DER MEER AND NICHOLAS MAES.

The men who dealt with common life in Holland found new and inexhaustible material to their hand. And they were free from traditions, so that each man's choice was made according to his bent. But, broadly, one of two aims was oftenest before them, and they may be classed almost according to which of these two aims they pursued. That common life they were to paint—did they look at it most as suggesting on the one hand an interest, so to say, literary or dramatic, or, on the other hand, as demanding a treatment resolutely pictorial? Was it the comedy of life in its brightness and action or the meditative pleasure of the cultivated eye, in the sunlight, in the shadow, in the glow of colour, in the fineness of fine fabrics, and in all these things suggested—that had its fascination for them? Jan Steen was held by the interest of the first; Nicholas Maes and Peter de Hooch and Van der Meer of Delft were under the spell of the second.

But their interest was not wholly technical. For them, in the brilliant or the sober things they painted, there was the value of association, and these men represented a characteristic of the Dutchmen—the appreciation of the charm of home. The climate, with its kind unkindness, prompted the Dutch to domesticity. For how, in flat and low-lying lands, over which, after so little sunshine, the mists rose damp at evening—amidst scenes of dreary outlook, with windmills against leaden skies, dark barges on their tardy course along the infinite canals, and all these very wont to be veiled suddenly in chilly rain—how not appreciate the charm of home—the charm of the great open fireside, of the clean-swept tile-hearth, of the spinet in quiet shadow in its accustomed corner, of the curtained window-seat, of the expected meal, of the tranquil occupation? The Dutchmen must have known that charm always, but perhaps they knew it best at the time when their great painters of it rose, when their slow struggle for national independence had ceased. The battle had been fought out painfully from town to town, village to village, so that for years there had been no sure possession nor quiet rest. At last, when the rest came, then the to us familiar things of every day, which we hardly notice because we hold them

safely, were found to be a keen delight. The charm of home became almost a religion to the people, and their great painters of homely life were its prophets.

The home, indeed, was not seldom the tavern, where, instead of the swept and garnished chamber with quaint designs of flooring and window-pane, hangings and chair-stuffs of exquisite and changeful colour—the chamber of De Hooch, of Maes, of Van der Meer of Delft—there was the rough table and the three-legged stool, the beer-pots, the copper vessels, the preparation for the vulgar meal, the litter of carrots on bench and floor, the pipe-smoking, lounging and loafing boors sleepy with drink or revelling with women of concentrated hideousness—the tavern of Dusart, the home of Ostade.

Whatever scene it was, it was seized with vivid apprehension of the charm of the actual, the interest of reality, beheld with an alert perception, and conveyed with a trained adroitness. The art which, with too little knowledge of the world around, had been fain to imagine and aspire, was to yield some place now to the art contented with familiar observation, and looking with opened eyes on the world as it was. The satisfaction in the life their eyes beheld, and this mastery in the rendering of it, are common to all of the great Dutch painters, lowest or

best of them, whether it be Ostade with his keen careful reproduction, or Van der Meer with his direct decisive realism, or Maes with his lurking suggestions of pathos, becoming one who would not throw aside the heritage of Rembrandt.

No three artists could be more strongly individual than Maes, De Hooch, and Van der Meer, and yet their pleasures were often the same; and though one of them had entered more than the others into Rembrandt's mind—had himself a mind more akin with Rembrandt's, and was not only, though he was surely, more directly his pupil—yet to the three alike, to the three in common, it was given to realise such subtleties of graduated light as had escaped even the keenness of their master. The three alike painted interiors, and painting a room they painted it with fine perception of its ordered harmony—its light stealing in at the window and diffused and modulated on the wall, the yellow-tinted wall shrinking into yellowish-browns of shadow, passing by strange reflections into neutral greys and greens, and then by sombre passage into further glooms of corners receding into ultimate darkness. All three painted it so: Maes and Van der Meer painted it with much perception too of the quietude of life that became its inmate bending over the spinning-wheel, its solitary

musician with slow fingers on the spinet. Differing themselves elsewhere, therein they differed from Peter de Hooch, for whom no human life was quite as interesting as the life of the sunshine.

The place of De Hooch's birth was long uncertain. No great success came to him in his life, and the life passed without any noise of record. Afterwards he slept unregarded, and now that in the newer admiration of the Dutch School justice is done to the pre-eminent merit of his work, investigations have been made, and trumpets blown over the results of the investigation—blown somewhat prematurely, we shall have to say, when we take note of how very little it is after all that is known of him. There are two or three bare facts. He does appear to have been born at Rotterdam. Chronicle of his marriage has been discovered; he was married at Delft in 1654. A year afterwards, having undoubtedly settled there, he on September 20, 1655, was inscribed in the register of the guild, 'Painter: as master, Pieter de Hooch, being a stranger. For the duty he has paid three florins.' And, in 1681, he died—it seems to have been at Haarlem.

The scanty record points to a brief work time. Also his pictures are few. Much contact with the

famous in his own day could hardly have been without its chronicle. There exists by him, in the museum at Amsterdam, a portrait of himself—a small panel, from which a slender and grave face, 'aged nineteen years,' looks out. Probably he was young when he married, as it was not till twelve months after that he took his rank as master: he was born, it is pretty safe to conclude, near about 1630; and the date on one of the works in the Peel collection, because it is one of his masterpieces, establishes the fact that as early as 1658 his art had reached perfection. Waagen and Bürger wish to conclude that he was directly the pupil of Rembrandt. If it was so, then, going from Rotterdam about 1650, he would have entered Rembrandt's studio at the best of moments—with Nicholas Maes—and arrived in Delft two or three years later, to take up his place in the guild. All this is possible, perhaps even likely, but the facts are waited for.

In De Hooch's paintings of interiors, parlour or kitchen, with groups of figures, or a single figure, he had but little of the power that was Steen's, and that was Metsu's, of giving interest to the people presented—of suggesting a story—or of holding us fascinated, as Maes did constantly by his presentation of their quiet and absorbed fulfilment of some

commonplace and daily task. Nor in his single figures did he hint at the sentiment that often in reticent and ordered measure filled the work of Maes, and was so in accord with its solemnity of colour and tone. Whether De Hooch's characters are humble or exalted—whether it is the serving-woman with her vegetables, the housewife with her beer-jug, the satin-robed gentleman, the cavalier with the long wineglass—the persons of his drama have no past, and we are careless of their future. Of human character he was not a subtle observer. His art has no command over the sources of feeling: his mind had little entrance into the secrets of lives. But quite unlike the lower artists among his skilled and accepted contemporaries, he did not sacrifice character to truths of texture and surface—to the woolliness of a table-cover, the lustre of a gown—and I no more blame him for his figures being what they are, and of such secondary interest, than I should blame a landscape painter for achievements as limited. De Hooch, like the landscape painter, was not a draughtsman of the figure. He was a student of light. To him—though in his paintings he often, in deference to the day's tastes, professed to tell a story—people and things had value or uselessness as they helped or obstructed

him in his unparalleled pictorial expression of the subtleties of sunshine. To class him—to class indeed Van der Meer and Maes so far as they are his fellows—as literal imitators of common fact is grossly to misconceive them. They were poets of fine apprehension and quickened sensitiveness.

De Hooch is one of the few Dutch masters not best to be seen in Holland, or rather he is one of the few to whom some justice may be done by any careful valuing of the things that are visible at the Louvre and the National Gallery. Yet until ten years ago we had no De Hooch. Now, three pictures, of which one was bought at an auction in Paris and the others with the collection of Sir Robert Peel, show him in full possession of his manual dexterity—are works of more than average quality, though it may be there are one or two of an even finer charm. For after all, the subject counts, and our own most forcible, our own of most accomplished craftsmanship, presents us not only with the slender brick-wall, yellow and red, the creeping greenery of vine, the light within the wall-door, but close here in the foreground, in distasteful neighbourhood, the dust-bin with its pile of rubbish and kitchen-stuff. The Louvre, on the other hand, is fortunate in two pictures in which that vivid realistic power of

De Hooch is employed to transport us to pleasanter places: in the most intricate of his pictures there, a lofty parlour, sober and beautiful, is the selected spot in which he will play out for us his drama of the sunshine.*

There are three main figures, large in the foreground: a lady with a red robe and yellow skirt; a cavalier holding the wonted drinking glass; another sitting. Pourtrayed, as often, without special felicity of grouping, colour, or expression, they are not the objects of our interest. But in the background there are two windows, tall, narrow, and placed high in the chamber. One is wholly curtained, shaded by the simple hanging folds of a brownish green, sober and dark, and yet a little golden. The other is uncovered, its tall oblong panes visible, and patterning space of sky beyond—sky flooded by the clear green gold of such a sunset as sometimes follows rain when the sky brightens at evening. These windows with their golden greens—the one shrouded and sober, the other uncovered and clear—form a chord of colour and lighting of which the harmony is never lost. The harmony is carried over all,—where the light falls on background figures

* Courtry has etched it: not especially successfully. It presents great difficulties to the art of black and white, and our own illustration is of its companion.

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of lovers more interesting than that group of the front, where it pauses on cheek or throat, catches at its fullest the shining bosses of the Cordova leather strained like wall-paper to wall, glimmers on portrait high in the chamber, is thrown back again into the black-framed mirror, is diffused in lowest tones over the rich warm textures of many-patterned fabrics, and wavers at last on the alternate black and yellow-grey marbles of the floor. The noblest place this, for De Hooch's drama, and his *dramatis personæ* a chosen company of fine fabrics and delightful things.

But take him on humbler ground, with humbler actors—the place a simple interior of the lowly, where pleasure in exceeding dainty neatness and exceeding ordered cleanliness must needs be a substitute for the more luxurious delight. The chords struck here are less grand and full, but they are clear and brilliant, and in this little picture (of the Van der Hoop collection at Amsterdam) the joy is just in the sharp sweetness of sunshine of which the humblest cottage in all that country is not to be debarred, when its latticed windows and its low wicket-gate doors face the full south, and into the cleared space of well-nigh empty chambers streams the airy light that De Hooch loved. To the right in the foreground is the shadowed bed—in alcove

humbly curtained. Close in front of that darkened alcove sits a young mother with a child kneeling at her knee, with child's head sunk in lap. To the left, a brick-red floor, with the household cat, curled and contented—a dark spot on the floor's breadth of brightness. Just beyond it, a door opened, and sunshine lighting it; still beyond, through keen clear passages of air, a yet brighter glow of floor in fuller and unbroken light; and there is an open window-shutter, square, daintily drawn, in a more subdued sunlight, silver-grey, and across it, as noon passes, in the airy and open stillness, travel the soft and patterned shadows of the window frame. Of light, in its intricate charm and intricate pleasantness, De Hooch is the revealing master.

At Delft, where De Hooch practised his art, Jan van der Meer was born; and he was born in 1632, within a year or two, therefore, of the birth of De Hooch. In his lifetime he had his admirers; a gossiping diarist records the ownership of one of his pictures by a prosperous shopkeeper who had paid for it a sum now equal to two or three hundred pounds. It remained for succeeding generations to go far towards forgetting him, till, twenty years ago, M. Bürger, noting here and there

his work in the museums of Holland, found in him a source of new and vivid interest, and wrote what he could of Van der Meer of Delft, and pushed his researches where research had never previously gone. He seems to have identified, or to have persuaded himself that he had identified, about eighty of the painter's pictures. Many had till then been unknown; many had borne the signature of the more popular De Hooch. Of the painter's life, owing to that absence of contemporary chronicle which with so many of these Dutch artists is so much to be lamented, M. Bürger discovered little. Van der Meer was, it is asserted, a pupil of Fabritius—a pupil, that is, of a pupil of Rembrandt. Was he also directly a pupil of Rembrandt? That is Bürger's supposition, and it may be that Van der Meer did really arrive, about 1654—after Fabritius's death—in Amsterdam, and enter the great master's painting room when Nicholas Maes had left it. But of Van der Meer, as of De Hooch, the facts remain to be established. Of Nicholas Maes alone, among these three, is there trustworthy record of the place where the art was studied and the master of whom it was learnt.

The habitual practice of Jan Van der Meer was of a wider range than that of De Hooch. It is true that, unlike De Hooch, he rarely painted stories—was

habitually, though not always, content to place in his interiors the single figure absorbed in work of the household or in more skilled craft; the astronomer with hand upon his globes and eyes absorbed in study; or the lacemaker, perhaps, bending engrossed over her work of art. But in these interiors, whether of the rarer kind, as where there are two figures and some approach to a story—in the *Soldier and the Laughing Woman*, say *—or of the commoner kind, where there is but one, and no story attempted but the story of a life very patient in its daily task—in these interiors it was less the play of the pure and vivid sunshine than of the milder daylight, under all conditions, that concerned and interested Van der Meer. Van der Meer has never, that I know, reached the gem-like quality of De Hooch's sunshine; but he is more preoccupied with problems not less difficult—the effect of light upon light, of reflected light on shadowed space, the effect of one thing's lustre on such lustre or texture as may happen to be near it. This De Hooch notes, and Nicholas Maes notes, and both wonderfully, but neither perhaps with quite the keenness, quite the attention, of Van der Meer of Delft. Again, though De Hooch has painted the

* M Double's, in Paris: excellently etched by Jacquemart.

effects of open air, it is generally the air of the back-yard, sunlit, or of the sunlit porch, or of the court with its paving and its greenery; and Van der Meer likewise has painted this, but he has also painted broad views of the long Dutch street and of the quaint town seen from across the river. That is, he has painted landscape, though it is but rarely. And again, if not actually with greater frequency than De Hooch, then at least with more triumphant success, he has grappled with portraiture. There is a woman's portrait by him in the D'Arenberg Gallery at Brussels, of the subtlest truth of the most irresistible fascination.

He has, if I may trust my own eyes in this matter, two manners of painting: in one he is smooth, and of an unsurpassed refinement of handling, sometimes even rather thin: in the other he is brusque, decisive, with clots of colour, breaking the surface, in Constable's way. And the two manners sometimes meet in the same picture.*

We have in our National Gallery no Van der Meer of Delft, but lately the Louvre has acquired one example of his work,—the *Lacemaker*, a small three-quarter's length, in which the pale thin colours of the

* See the picture now in the possession of Lord Powerscourt: a characteristic example not, alas! wholly unchanged by time or imprudence.

occupied face do not prevent its dominating over the more vivid accessories, which are those wholly of the lacemaker's craft, many needles and blue pillows—blue being a colour which Van der Meer much liked, and which he used with even greater audacity than another lover of it, Gabriel Metsu. Now about this picture, in which the background counts for nothing, there is no charm whatever—as there often is—of the interior; and if we are to take interest at all it must be wholly in a face not beautiful, hardly even vivacious, but into which Van der Meer put, as his wont was, when that alone was to engage us, the charm of a calm and occupied intelligence. That, and no other charm, but that in a still higher degree—is in the D'Arenberg portrait, nearly life size, but hardly a half-length portrait, for it stops where the figure's grey draperies touch the elbow, and throws us back for interest not on the brown eyes or smooth brown hair, but on the strange individual expression of the pale, clear face. The girl is plain of feature, without one point of undisputed comeliness, and yet if you met her you would go and talk to her, and you know that she would have the charm of conversation—either some new thing to tell, or an old thing told in some new way, and her own.

Of the out-door subjects perhaps the finest is the view of Delft in the Mauritzhuis at the Hague. We look from one bank to the other, across the waters of a broad canal or river; and on the other rises the town of Delft, one of its gates spanning a small canal as the small canal effects its junction with the greater just in front of us, and by the high gate side, to left and right, rise houses, clusters of houses, roof cutting roof. The town is massed there—houses, church, and trees—behind that one face of it which fronts the broad water. For vigour and brilliancy of painting it seems almost a unique thing, and yet it is not more vigorous, only more interesting, than an amazing little street and house-front view in the Six collection—castellated houses broken to the left by a bit of low wall in which is a dark arch, and here a passage going away from the street, under deep shadows first, but breaking out somewhere into the light beyond, where a woman bends in homely business over a washing-tub; and there a black doorway in which a woman sits white-capped and tippeted (with Van der Meer's not infrequent audacities of contrast); and there again, against the red bricks and red shutters of a housefront to the right, there is set in all reality and all consummate harem the coolness of creamy white wall and a grey

green shutter we are grateful for in that bright midday sun. When Van der Meer painted the open-air lights of the street and the town side, he left for the most part his subtleties behind him—those subtleties of tint and tone so infinitely graduated, which he extends behind the vigorous freedom of his foreground figures in subjects of interiors. And I think no other painter who has painted the sharp contrasts, the decided colours of the one, has ever been so utterly a master of the timid changes of the other.

The great interior, with a single figure, of the Six collection is a good example—nay, is the most splendid that I know—of that amazing vigour of foreground colour common to his landscapes, in full relief against the gently wrought intricacies of modulated light in wall and corner. The picture represents a young woman, in greenish-yellow bodice, with a yellowish-green at the sleeves, with a blue apron, and with a sober red skirt—for in the arrangement of colour Van der Meer fears nothing in the way of mixtures, and has nothing to fear. And the young woman so arrayed is just now busy in pouring milk from a red jug to a red basin, while bread rough and brown lies in a basket on the same table, and there is a gathered bit of deep and greyish-blue

drapery on the sunny green of the table-cloth. To the left there is a narrow-paned window, and outside, the sunshine, and inside the sunshine too, striking on the hand and then on the edge of the table-cloth, making it yellow, and turning the yellow bodice gold, and flooding the wall in the near background with a diffused light, of a pale golden grey. Among all Van der Meer's interiors there is no masterpiece of a more brilliant boldness; yet it is great, not only for its triumphs over the difficulties of local colour and local light, nor only for suggestions of the common texture and substance of homely things, but also for a face profoundly noticed and profoundly understood —here again, as so often in the art of Van der Meer, a face of quiet intelligent absorption in the momentary task.

Nicholas Maes was one of those gifted and brilliant men who should have died young, for the immense achievements of his youth were never supported by the work of his middle age. The last century criticism of the sagacious Descamps has nevertheless classed him in chief as a painter of the works by which he is least entitled to live—a painter of portraits, with whom pictures of the kind that we have got to like him for were but a less important

business. Some day the laborious historian may accumulate material which shall enable us to trace with accuracy of detail the rise and fall of Nicholas Maes, from that early but fascinating and already well-nigh masterly picture in the Amsterdam Museum —a portrait ennobled by imagination—and so through the series of his interiors as splendid in tone as refined and subdued in sentiment, to the later portraits in which his early preoccupation is leaving him, and so to those in which it is utterly gone and only a painter feebly forcible or avowedly degenerate remains to play fast and loose with the fag end of talent debauched.

Born at Dordrecht in 1632, he enters in 1650 the studio of Rembrandt at Amsterdam, and for the next ten years the greatest of the Dutch masters has no worthier pupil. Just what De Koninck was to Rembrandt in landscape, Maes was to him in pictures whose interest centred in humanity; he was the pupil, that is to say, with whom the seed of Rembrandt's teaching fell on the kindliest and fittest ground. He had too much of individual and personal genius to be an imitator, but he had too profound a sympathy with Rembrandt to avoid resembling him. Like his master, he was a painter of shadowed places and of sad and quiet lives. Of

course he lacked Rembrandt's endless variety. He shut himself up, in the main, with too few types—narrowed himself, in the main, to the expression of too few characters. Rembrandt himself was interested in, and Rembrandt understood, the men of action; these he grasped no less strongly than the figures of reverie. But with Maes it is the mind that broods, the character that meditates and ponders, rather than acts, which interests him. Others subordinately interest him: even a little the servant in her work;* or the servant idle, in a brief sleep which has a snatch of the humour that pleased the age;† or the woman at the spinnet, but her music is already of reverie; or the child with the Dutch housewife—but the child, I note it, is neither at play nor at work, but, true to her part in Maes's drama, watching, observing, considering, though it is but the scraping of a parsnip. And Maes strikes early his note of meditation—strikes it in that work of his youth and apprenticeship, *La Réveuse* of the Amsterdam Museum; a large picture, in technical qualities high already though not perfect, and in expression sweet, tender, reticent, and true. In an olive-green gown, whose colour is set against the

* *La Laitière*, in the Van Loon collection.

† *The Idle Servant*, in the National Gallery.

deep, yet glowing red of the open window-shutters, a girl stands leaning from the window; dark green leaves and clusters of large apricots are around the window and below it. Already there is a pleasant arrangement of form and hue, colour sober and yet rich and splendid rather than subtle, and the picture grapples with no special intricacies of light. But here already is the figure of reverie: no reverie indeed of the ascetic or the disappointed or the feebly sentimental; but a healthy Dutch girl, rounded in form and supple of flesh, her thoughts adrift in strange places of the life that is before her.

Well, you feel she is the fit forerunner of that other type afterwards constantly repeated; the woman in old age and in humble estate, whose thoughts are rather of the life that is behind. Generally she is sitting at the spinning-wheel—a figure half or not quite half-life size, as in Mr. Robarts's picture, seen at Burlington House in 1877; as in the picture in the Van der Hoop collection: best of all, perhaps, as in the picture not long since at Dordrecht, Maes's birthplace, but now part of a splendid legacy to the Museum of Amsterdam. She is careworn, thin, deeply wrinkled: accustomed always to a rigid and narrow economy, an almost painful and timid carefulness, which yet has come

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Nicholas Maes : ' Le Bénédicité '

to be regarded by her as life's ordinary and necessary condition. On a shelf, perhaps, above her—in some half light that penetrates from the narrow window, and is diffused a little over walls mostly bare—are ranged the jug or two, and the humble platters, that tell of meals homely and solitary. At her work her hand is ever so little slackened. The hands waxing nerveless and the eyes dim leave her still true to her slow busyness—to whatever may be left of her tranquil occupation. With varying painter's skill all this is painted: sometimes with much of subtlety, as in Amsterdam, sometimes with too crude and brutal a contrast of the favourite black and red—the almost inevitable red of the sleeve in Maes—as in Mr. Robarts's picture.

Once or twice—it is so in Maes's masterpiece in this order of work, a picture in a club-house at Amsterdam, and in the pathetic picture in the Lacaze collection—the woman of this type, for of course she is not always the very same person, is seated to her meal. It is the *Grace before Meat*: and the aged woman is now at her prayer. Of Maes's large-scale pictures the Amsterdam example is, perhaps, the most finely graduated; the mere arrangement, effective as that is, of black and white, and shadow and light, being as nothing compared with the tenderness

of creeping lights on the wall and on the spread table-cover, or with the warm and almost solemn glow on the *grès de Flandre* and humble implements of the meal. A plain white cap is on the simple head; the scanty folds of a coarse gown drape the still figure; and near the woman's side are ranged the household keys—symbol of order and care. The lonely face, wrapped now in devout thought, tells of the sadness of age—of the sadness of restraint.

From painting these things and these persons—the girl and the old woman; the family perhaps with its Rembrandt-like pathos of an old man, once, as in the Steengracht collection—Maes having quitted the studio, quits at last the influence, of the master. He betakes himself to Antwerp, and having no doubt already ventured upon certain portraits that are portraits purely, such as that of the Dutch magistrate in his pleasant workroom,* he qualifies for the distinction the sagacious Descamps will presently give him, and during long years of a maturity we should be happy to forget, waxes now coarse, now feeble. At Antwerp he is a friend of Jordaens, now at the latter part of the sixteenth century almost the best man left in a city from

* In the D'Arenberg Gallery, at Brussels.

which Rubens has passed. Maes is there the practiser of an art so different from his earlier that the question has even been raised whether the portrait painter of those latter years was not another bearing his name. The facts that are known, though they are few, seem to deny it. And in 1693, aged sixty-one years, died, it seems, Nicholas Maes, one of the strangest instances not of a talent that was promising, but of a genius that was great, an art consummate and accomplished, though limited, which became too soon perverted, and then was somewhat early buried out of sight—yet a genius and an art that left us after all, in our day, no irritating array of ambitious failures on which attention must be fixed. During ten splendid years, from 1650 to 1660—or it may be a little later—there is a series of high work. What followed is really known less, and we can afford to ignore it.

We think of Nicholas Maes then as the painter of a home life cheerful with the merry eyes of childhood, or dignified with the gravity of common pursuits, or sobered and saddened with the experience of age—the age of lonely and humble. We think of him as one who, by the Queen's *Listener* (painted when he was yet young), by the noble interior seen at Burlington House in 1875, and by

some other pictures, such as that at the Amsterdam club-house, and that in the Lacaze collection, which carry also another message more purely his own—we think of him by these as one of the band that carried here and again to perfection what their master left incomplete—the subtleties of passage from breadths of sunshine glowing or cool, to the effects of the interior atmosphere, on room side, chamber wall, where, with tints strangely neutral, it is difficult to say whether light begins to be shadow or shadow begins to be light, and so amid half glooms to isolated points of brightness the eye may pass to—as in the Queen's *Listener*, where the rounded baluster head catches at just one point of its equal curve the stray glimmer: the glimmer breaking out again, yellow and brassy, on the further nails of the straight Dutch chair that peers from background space and wall, cosy in their gathered dimness. With these men,—these poetic Dutchmen—light is more than ever before a presence of slow and changeful life: giving life too and sense of companionship to else inanimate things. Maes and his fellows followed its subtleties on chamber wall and hanging, and in its narrow yet eventful journey from window to hearth—they played out for us its little drama there within that limited space they knew so well and calculated

so acutely—much as the more commonly extolled painters of our last generation watched it in conflicts of sunshine and shadow in English landscape. Nor when prepossessions are once laid aside, is it easy to say whether the greater praise in art belongs to the one or the other. In itself the tree trunk, the damp herbage, the clod of earth, even the rain cloud, is hardly a worthier or more proper object to be painted than hearth and hanging, window and wall.

The artist, giving a quality as well as finding one, transmutes and exalts alike the one thing and the other; and so what Turner, Constable, De Wint did for the country—in revealing beauty and interest hidden till they pourtrayed them—De Hooch and Van der Meer and Nicholas Maes did for the home.

TERBURG AND METSU.

We have not seen very much of the Genre painting of Holland before we recognise that the objects for which the painting of interiors was undertaken, were very widely different. The delightful artists of the true succession of Rembrandt—De Hooch and Van der Meer, and Maes—were concerned with the problems of sunshine and shadow. But it was a pupil of Rembrandt, in Rembrandt's early days, it was Gerard Dou, who led the way to the minutest representation of dress, of fabrics that hung on the parlour-wall or covered the parlour chair, of the hundred accessories of use or ornament that crowded the well-stored room. And he too had a school. Then again there was that worthier group, the true painters of character: for whom the interest of a household scene lay less in the accuracy with which they could reproduce a fabric than in the finer fidelity with which they could note an expression and record a gesture. Of that group—the most

pregnant, the most fruitful—Gerard Terburg was the earliest master.

It is natural, of course, that the first keen and qualified discoverer in Holland of this new art of social observation should have been an eminent painter of portraits: natural too that he should have been a man accustomed from the first to a society in which it was generally a gracious and cultivated character that was caught expressing itself, now by voice, and now by gaze, and now by movement. The humours of the very vulgar, even the awkwardness and dulness of the lower bourgeois, would have had no attraction for Terburg, and had he been born amongst either the one or the other, there would have been nothing to stimulate and encourage his art. Or rather, his art, had he practised it at all, would have been confined to the endeavour to paint history without the truth of intimate knowledge, and portraits without the truth of sympathy. But Terburg, like Metsu—nay, even more conspicuously than Metsu—had the privilege of such a birth and breeding as gave him entrance into what was pleasantest and most refined in the Dutch life of his day; and to live with the pictures of Terburg is to live with no visions indeed of rare and admirable beauty, with no record of high endea-

vour or splendid passion, but with the counterfeit presentments of dignified dames and courteous gentlemen who take life calmly, who are engaged placidly with serious business, or in honest and happy recreation. It is a society quite free from the pressure of circumstance. They are strangers, Terburg's people, to material want. Poverty is not only not theirs, but the news of its existence has never reached them. The very crises of personal life have been got over by them—as befits well-bred people—perfectly, and in private. They have erred, being human; but their errors, as in *Conseil Paternel* (which we shall study more presently), have been brought home to them gently, over a glass of wine—gravely indeed, but by the agency of judicious intermediaries, to spare them a shock—and the question, even when it was a dangerous one, has been discussed in tones not inconsistent with the friendly civilities of an afternoon call.

Well, it was necessarily with a subtle eye that Terburg observed and with a gently ordered hand that he pourtrayed the quiet life and reticent manners of the people of his world. To have pourtrayed them successfully, in their faintly expressed variations, he must have seen very much of them. With such delicate material for art, a stranger, an

outsider, cannot successfully engage himself. Terburg was at home with it.

Born in 1608, at Zwolle, a small place out of the clatter of commercial life and movement, and dying, some seventy years afterwards, in another small place, —Deventer—his fortunes took him during that long interval into many lands, and there were few painters of his day who had so wide an experience of the world of cities and of men. His father had journeyed in Italy, and wished a like opportunity for his son. Terburg was instructed in his craft in his native town; then at that very famous local centre for the arts, Haarlem.* Afterwards he began his travels. Tradition records, and necessarily inexactly, the list of places that he visited. He is said to have come to England. Certainly he was in Germany, Italy, and Spain: probably he passed through France, at a period when French art was barren. But foreign travel did nothing to turn him aside from the path early marked out for the exercise of his genius. He survived the peril of Italy. He was in the south in the last days of religious painting there, at a time when the religious sentiment had vanished; and there is therefore little to wonder at if he—a matter-of-fact man of the world, as his portrait shows us

* M. Van Der Willigen: *Les artistes d'Haarlem*: p. 352.

—found small promptings to abandon the art he had been bred to for the art that cultivated vainly and feebly that which was scarcely felt to be ideal any more. Terburg remained a Dutchman, occupied with the realities that he was able to observe: and his tract was wide for observation.

Famed already for excellence in portraiture, he found himself in 1646 at Münster, where the plenipotentiaries were gathered for negotiations for peace. Here, at this time, he executed his most famous historical picture: a portrait-group made historical by the importance of the event commemorated and the patience and solidity of his work.* The story is that it was at Münster that Terburg achieved the acquaintance of the ambassador of Spain, and this by the aid of an adroit service rendered to a Spanish artist less gifted than himself. The ambassador took him to Madrid, introduced him to the king and court, and Madrid became to him the scene of brilliant successes and inconvenient triumphs. So well received was Terburg by the women—so full of social gifts was he, and of the *savoir plaire*—that he roused personal as well as professional jealousy, and had eventually to depart. From many wanderings he returned to his own country; married one who appears to have been

* *The Congress of Münster*: Peel collection, National Gallery.

a family connection; painted that portrait of himself as he looked in full middle age which the Museum at the Hague shows us; and settled down, it is surmised, in the town of Deventer, where long afterwards he died. He became a burgomaster of his town, and exercised his craft there, chiefly, it would seem, in that Genre painting which after all is what ensures to him his permanent place in art. In quiet undisturbed prosperity he lived to old age: dying in the year 1681, when he was seventy-three.

I said that Terburg's Genre painting ensured to him his permanent place, and I add that his portraits, even his historical pictures, are those of a Genre painter. With rare exceptions—the Hague portrait of himself is one of them—they are of strictly cabinet size: they were designed for the adornment of the limited chamber, of the city house, and not for the decoration of the public gallery. Again, as in the portrait of the Princesse de Condé, niece of Richelieu—a small full length figure, seen at our Exhibition of Old Masters in 1877—the imitative labour bestowed on the accessories recalls and suggests the practice of Genre. Here, as in the pictures of incident and pictures of finery, there is the satin gown studied and rendered by the most accomplished of its interpreters: the

thickish and heavy fold, that makes a broad line catching the highest light, the spaces of lesser light, or light more graduated, or light reflected in cream-coloured glow, and the lower-toned surfaces in gentle and very partial shadow. It may be that this laborious treatment of an ornamental accessory is not here out of place, but there are portions of the design which demand a greater freedom, and they do not, with Terburg, receive it. There is the hair, for instance. A quite noble portrait painter is accustomed to scan it much, but to render it boldly, with no petty and formal exactness. He sees quickly, and it must interest him to see, in various models, its many differences of colour, texture, and growth—each characteristic of the person pourtrayed. He catches the characteristic, whatever it may be, and he suggests it in his picture. Terburg paints hair without this pleasure in it: without, apparently, this perception of its variety. The fine fabric has interested him more than the hair, and the studied smoothness of the complexion is more precious to him. He had against him, it is true, the fashion of his day, especially with women: whether the rigid straightness of hair plastered or strained to forehead, or the stiffness of the curl. There is that excuse for him; but after all here is the beginning, in one

great man and subtle observer, of that mechanical and dullard rendering of living and expressive things which we find afterwards, only more abundantly, in the work of Mieris. We do not need to say that the portraits of Terburg, whether single studies, as in the *Princesse de Condé*, or richly varied groups, as in *The Congress of Münster*, are great in many qualities of portraiture. He never so practised Genre that Genre made him trivial. Rather, it increased his observation; and as a whole he rises, I think, in *The Congress of Münster* to the highest power of which that small scale is capable, in recording varied character and the many expressions of men engaged upon a common purpose. He did nothing here in which he did not show himself to be a sober and a serious artist.

But it was in Genre painting, and in Genre painting of ample size, that Terburg had his best opportunities, and best used them. It was here that his skill in the discernment and expression of character found the fullest and most unfettered play. And considerable as was often the scale on which he worked, no spot of his canvas was empty of valuable record. Here, in Genre painting, he was like a dramatist writing his thought out keenly, without fear of a censor: here he was really painting

his very truest portraits because there was no one coming, when they were finished, to say that they failed in this point or in that. In Literature the novelist is often truer, far more profoundly true, than the historian or the professed biographer; and in Art the vigorous and brilliant painter of Genre has chances denied to the portrait painter, or chances which only the very greatest portrait painters are audacious enough to seize. There was nothing apparently in Terburg's temperament or Terburg's genius to place him—keen and serious artist though he was—with those very few who in their portraiture paint, remorselessly, unpalatable truths. Like the favourite portrait painters of England—like Vandyke and Reynolds—he was alive to personal influence. He was a man of society. Such men, without conscious or palpable flattery, are swayed a little in their work this way or that. Far enough removed indeed from the less adroit courtiers or less skilled artists, they yet take only the best moment, and put only the best interpretation. And the result may be a thing of beauty, a thing of dignity, of grace, even of subtle and exquisite suggestion; but it will never be—for it has never aimed to be—a thing of plain uncompromising truth.

And there are many brilliant painters, moreover,

who will have done themselves but scanty wrong in bending thus to the exigency of their craft and place. For perhaps their own happiest expression of themselves in Art consists in the unvaried and fertile production of work that displays a delicate sensitiveness to lovely colour or a curious facility of grace. Their work is to all the world most attractive when they idealise or exalt. Only there are those also whose true gift does not lie in the capacity for impressive stateliness or a dainty research of beauty. Their gift is rather in fine and subtle reading of the every-day visage: they understand not human nature *endimanché*, but the human nature of the six days of the week. Terburg was one of them, and because he was one of them he was greatest in Genre painting.

But the revelations of expression and character that most interested him were found chiefly, as I said earlier, in the best society. To this rule there are very few exceptions, and the few have been already brought, by influential writers, into almost undue prominence. As a fact, he rarely descends below the comfortable bourgeoisié; and when, as in the *Apfelschälerinn* of a foreign gallery,* his leading character is engaged in some humble business

* The Belvedere at Vienna.

of the house or kitchen, she is generally engaged as an amateur, as a gentlewoman who in simple times at all events should know as much as her servant, as a damsel schooled now in the duties of a housewife. But in occupying himself with good society, Terburg did not occupy himself wholly with its most intellectual pursuits. From time to time, being Dutchman and naturalist, he concerned himself with the representation of the appetites, and he was never more thoroughly himself than when he was so concerned, for in his representation of bodily instincts he knew precisely where to stop—if you once grant him that he had a right to begin. He stops always on the right side of grossness, and is guiltless moreover of hints which he has not the courage to embody. There is nothing whatever beyond a similarity of occupation to connect his drinking girl—a picture once in the Choiseul Gallery—with the boozing and bestial peasants that crowd the canvasses of Dusart and Bega. And in his picture of the bluff and middle-aged warrior whose last action of valour has been to arrive, unsought and undesired, in the apartment of a beauty not intimately known to him,* there is nothing to recall the

* *Un militaire tendant de l'argent à une jeune femme*: the picture in the Louvre.

meretricious suggestiveness of such themes when, as in the latter years of the Eighteenth Century in France, they are treated by weaker and less manly hands. In his rare treatment of themes like these, Terburg ranks at any rate with the soberer and least repulsive masters.

Far oftener the art of Terburg invites us to be with him in the fine decorum of a noble chamber—a chamber largely proportioned, massively disposed, carefully tended; the cheerful hearth is flanked by the marble columns of the mantelpiece; rich hangings drape the walls and windows; pictures framed in the broad deep bands of ebony that suit best to our own day Terburg's works and those of his fellows, stand forth here and there; the spinnet is open, and refined fingers stray over the keyboard. Here there is perhaps a mandoline, there the now prized handiwork of some first fashioner of the violin. And in this apartment, built to last very long, and furnished once for all, for at least one lifetime, pass the scenes that are most often recorded by Terburg's brush, the scenes that revealed his world to him—that gave the very gentle stimulus he wanted to his slow but sure imagination. Perhaps the incident is of quite daily occurrence: the business, the familiar

music lesson—*the Guitar lesson*, it may be.* A lady, in yellow and white satin, is seated, playing. Her master, young, portly, and serene, sits opposite, and is reading the music: he is quietly keeping time with his hand. Another man stands in the background. The heads of both, according to the custom of the day, remain covered in the woman's presence. By the lady's chair is the brown and white spaniel—the dog of gentle life, the dog of Terburg and Metsu. There is nothing strangely fascinating in such a scene as this. It is purely uneventful. It is the art of Terburg to give it its maximum of interest by recording it with thoroughness of understanding and thoroughness of work. The careful Dutchman knows that the interest of a subject depends very much upon the interest and the energy with which he deals with it.

But often too it is something more of a story that Terburg presents: it is the scene of which *Le Conseil Paternel* may stand for type. No picture of the master's is more famous than this; partly because it is in truth great, but partly also because there are no less than three versions of it, only slightly differing, and in three famous collections; † and partly too

* Peel collection, National Gallery.

† At Bridgewater House, at Berlin, and at Amsterdam.

g: 'The Guitar Lesson

because one of these is the subject of one of the most brilliant engravings by the engraver who has been generally thought to render best the works of the Dutch painters of polite life—I mean J. G. Wille. It has been claimed by Waagen, for the *Conseil Paternel*, that it is not in itself a complete story, but a contribution towards a story: it has been claimed for it that it is part of a *suite*. But I think we shall see that it is really independent, or, at the least, that it forms no part of the series with which the German chronicler has sought to connect it. We will pass to this later. For the moment it is interesting to note, with regard to Terburg's story-telling, that he did undoubtedly on more than one occasion make use of some two or three pictures, instead of a single picture, to paint the social intrigue he was just then minded to record. Instances of this practice—a practice so valuable to our own Hogarth, so indispensable even, one may say, to the due presentation of that wealth of inventive fancy which crowded Hogarth's work—are rare among the painters of the seventeenth century—are rare, but not wholly without parallel, among the Dutchmen. The visitor to the National Gallery who looks with carefulness at those two pictures of Teniers's called

A River Scene and *The Surprise**—but both of them figure subjects really, and not, as the titles would seem to indicate, divided by the difference of their themes—will have something to occupy him in deciding for himself whether the one picture is, or is not, the sequel of the other.

Amongst Terburg's own designs a sequence of theme occurs in three pictures, of which two are at Dresden, and one, the last of them, at Munich. The first and third may be known well through engravings, which alone are enough to prove the connection, by similarity of countenance and costume in the figures. The story is a love-story; and in the first picture the lover, who is an officer, is writing a letter which will be conveyed to his mistress by a trumpeter now standing by in attitude of attendance. The second scene transports us to the house of the mistress: a damsel dressed in satin, and just now washing her hands in a basin which is brought her by her maid. This is the middle volume of the novel: the "padding" of the story. Nothing important passes. But in the third picture the trumpeter has arrived in the chamber of the heroine, and proffers the love-letter which the watchful presence of the maid, whose soul is above intrigue, makes the

* National Gallery: Peel collection, Nos. 861, 862.

young heroine hesitate to take. It is Waagen's theory that the *Conseil Paternel* is the end of the business: that the girl has taken the letter: that much or little of unpermitted love has been made in secret between times; that the waiting maid has unburdened herself of what she knows of the matter; and that the celebrated scene, of which there are such slightly differing versions at Berlin, at Amsterdam, and at Bridgewater House pourtrays the heroine suffering the reproach of her parents. Now the *Conseil Paternel* consists of three figures, of which two are father and mother and the third the daughter. The room in which the scene passes is not one which we have seen before: the parents we have not had occasion to see before; and the damsel, whom Waagen supposes we have seen, has her back to the spectator and is impossible of recognition. Moreover, it seems to have been forgotten that the parents here are not in their own home. Their dress, their attitude, their very occupation of taking the wine of ceremony, as at a visit not very frequently paid, indicates that the house is not theirs. The true story of the *Conseil Paternel* is more probably this—that a married daughter has incurred some displeasure, has been guilty of some folly; and her parents, still on terms of friendship with her, have

called to enforce an argument or administer a timely reproof. And so the *Conseil Paternel* is an independent picture.

Excellence of attitude, the charging of attitude with the maximum of expression, are the most eminent virtues of the *Conseil Paternel*; and the young woman seen from behind—the woman standing, timid though composed, ashamed though self-controlled, with head a little drooped, a little turned aside, as she hears the argument and suffers the reproach—shows, as perhaps no other figure shows in all the range of Terburg's work, his command of postures that reveal the mind in meditation. But the charging of the human face itself with its fullest expression—an expression chiefly with Terburg of weighty consideration or pre-occupied reverie—was also his task in Genre painting; and in the Queen's collection at Buckingham Palace there is the picture in which with perhaps the most unerring skill he has fulfilled that task. It is called *The Letter*. Charles Leslie praised it, rightly, as one of the finest of all Terburg's works; and he was thinking, doubtless, when he cited it, not only of the consummate expressiveness of one of its figures, but of the virtue of harmonious and glowing colour and the charm of a touch here unusually

facile and free. But the virtue is common to so many of the Dutchmen, and the charm is so supremely Metsu's—Terburg's younger rival—that it is not to either that the picture owes its place. A blonde girl, tame and unlovely, but in pretty pale blue bodice and in satin skirt grey and creamy, stands reading a letter; a writing lady stops in her work to listen, pays profound and anxious attention; a page, bearing a chased ewer, waits awhile; and the brown spaniel lies curled on the grey-brown chair. If the listening woman is indeed the mother, as Waagen says, then she is young for the office; but it is her intense solicitude that favours the guess, and the expression of her solicitude is the strength of the picture. What is the news of the letter, that she comprehends with so much deeper an intelligence than the untutored girl—that has filled her face with meaning, and made her a little sad and very heedful? The hand, with gesture of consideration, is raised to the head, or the head sunk slightly to the supporting hand, but in the dropped lip and the great fullness of the eyes abides the chief expression. "A beautiful and tranquil home scene," the little private Palace catalogue justly calls this untouched and exquisite work. "The perfection of the painting enforces the sentiment," and never comes in the way of it.

At first sight or at a slight acquaintance, Metsu's work is not easily separated from Terburg's, and in Genre painting, and especially in the painting of home scenes, the difference between the two masters is never, even at the last, a very wide one. But the observer does not take long to see that the touch and execution of the one are not often those of the other—that Metsu reached habitually a facility and freedom which were Terburg's only now and now again. And the observer whose vision is not confined to variations or likenesses of handling and technical treatment, perceives that Metsu's world, if sometimes less exalted, was at least a larger world than that of his early rival. In profound and equal comprehension of that larger world, Metsu himself came to be distanced by Jan Steen, the most brilliant humourist, the most biting satirist, the shrewdest and yet most genial chronicler of the unveiled moments of men. But while the dramatic sympathies of Terburg were true, those of Metsu were already more than true—they were wide. It is plain indeed that Metsu's imagination had no grasp of the sacred themes with which, as in a Louvre picture, he was pleased now and then to occupy himself. But he was not at fault when, like Terburg, he painted the good society of Holland, nor

was he at fault when he went into the market-place and caught such humours of the crowd as the lower painters revelled in. Meeting Terburg on the common ground of home scenes of gentle life, Metsu but rarely followed him in the practice of portraiture; but he passed beyond Terburg by the wider range which he gave to his comedy of the interior: he ventured, here and there, on suggestions which the more courtly and exalted artist discreetly suppressed. And in the heartiness with which, at need, he depicted the pleasures of rustic and boor, Metsu allied himself with artists with whom the mass of his work would never prompt us to associate him.

Moreover, there was connected with his freedom and facility of touch, the possession by Metsu in larger measure than any of his brethren, of a skill invaluable to the Genre painter. He had at his command the full control of a source of expression which he was among the very first to comprehend. He was the master of the gesture of the hand. Complexity of facial expression and subtlety of attitude—the expressiveness, in a word, of even the dullish and quiet countenance, and the expressiveness of the position of the figure—Terburg had studied and had often attained. The perfect

drawing of the hand, and the alert and full perception of its interest, character, and beauty which perfect drawing demands, we shall have to speak of as among the most noteworthy excellences of even so great a man as Watteau. Watteau knew hands absolutely, and nothing in them could escape him; and he was the first draughtsman, and for all that I know the last, who wrung from the lines of the hand the whole of their charm and meaning. But there were necessarily many artists before Watteau who had recognised in the hand this or that characteristic and a general significance. Severer masters, Holbein and Leonardo, learnt its anatomy. The hand is eloquent in Rembrandt. Sometimes, as in his *Clement de Jonghe*, it is a character that he makes it express, and sometimes, as in the etching of his mother, "*au voile noir*," it is a mood. But it is rarely a momentary action. Now with Metsu, the excellence we see is not so much of the hand at rest as of the hand in movement. He had studied a thousand of its actions, and he distinguished each one of them from all the others.

But of course there cannot be claimed for Metsu, even in this matter of fine and delicate control of the hand's movements, a virtue which his comrades did not share. Without some measure

of it, much of the charm of Dutch Genre painting would be gone. To possess it, in some measure, is a note of the school; and to be without it is a note of the contemporary schools of Italy—to have it but scantily is a note even of the earlier and the greatest. Terburg and Jan Steen had it richly, but it was preeminently Metsu's. There is hardly a picture of Metsu's in which the possession of it is not indicated in a touch decisive and certain, and in which it does not give strength and delicate reality to the idea of the absorbed occupation. Here perhaps the fingers are tuning a violin, as in *The Duet* of our great Peel collection—the very eyes almost closed, the better to listen to the daintiest differences of sound: the senses shrunk and concentrated as it were upon those two only, of exquisite hearing and exquisite touch, the head and hand of the musician marvels of accurate and sensitive gesture. Or there, as in the *Music Lesson*, the fingers are falling, light and soft, in due succession, upon the keys of the spinnet; or they are holding the drinking glass by the bottom with small firm localised pressure, as in the picture at the Louvre; or, as in the picture of *Metsu's Wife*, at Dresden, they clench faintly the flower's stalk, just that it shall not fall from the smooth hand;

or the pipe, in our *Drowsy Landlady*,* is adroitly manœuvred in its tickling of the plump breast.

The variety of Metsu is seen in Paris: his perfection even better in London. In Paris, at the Louvre, there is his greatest outdoor scene of humble life, *The Vegetable Market at Amsterdam*: there is there the sacred piece in which he has failed—the piece that one wonders he ever painted—and there is there too one of his happiest and most expressive interiors,—the picture of the lady and the cavalier. It has always been a tradition that Metsu was a friend of Jan Steen's, and *The Vegetable Market at Amsterdam* is assumed to have been painted not without Steen's influence: "this delicate Metsu," as Bürger conceives him—this Metsu, with his "airs de marquis"—being, it is urged, incapable of spontaneously and voluntarily forsaking the refinement of the parlour, for the bustle of low life in the market place. But there is no sufficient reason to believe it, and the pictures are numerous which break the seeming abruptness of the transition from the gentle to the vulgar. There is the over-praised picture in Bridgewater House, for example—that of a horseman halting at a house-door, while the hostess gives him to drink: no great

* National Gallery: Wynn Ellis collection.

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Metsu : 'The Duet

instance of the painter's skill, though a painful chronicler has been pleased to describe it as "of great breadth and lightness," and as painted in the silvery tone of Metsu's later time. To us its interest is partly in that it is one of a group which connects the painting of the parlour with the painting of the cabbage-stall: partly in the fact that it has the master's universal virtue, truth of gesture; but it shows no pleasure in subtle or loving treatment of the outdoor light: it has even no most distant kinship with the pictures of atmospheric effect. There is again the picture in the Amsterdam Museum—a second rate picture at best—of the man and woman over the small table fully charged. From these to *The Amsterdam Vegetable Market* there is no such great or sudden transition.

But the *Vegetable Market* is in subject an exception in Gabriel Metsu's work. With its free artistic rendering of tent and tree instead of curtain and wall, with its vivid touches of the bargain-making nature, with its laughter of boorish lovers at their roughish horse-play, it has no claim to be typical. It is on the very end and edge of the domain of Metsu. We see him more nobly and more truly in London: in either of the exquisite examples of his work in the Peel collection, and in the one master-

piece of his, so wholly admirable and wholly faultless, which is in the possession of the Queen. To know these three, and to know them intimately, is to have drawn from Metsu the pleasure he is capable of giving: so full are they, in their due degree, of his most delicate conception and of his most expressive design and of the richest and the most harmonious of his hues. The Peel pictures are perhaps the greatest in gesture, and the most varied, though not always the most exquisitely ordered, in colour and tone. The predominating hues of the first, *The Duet*, are a greyish-brown and various reds, and, massed as Metsu has massed them, they are splendidly aglow. Like many others of the Dutchmen, Metsu was fond of reds, and of reds sometimes less sober than those which all the world admires in the works of the great colourists of Venice: reds sometimes violent instead of flat or subdued. Nicholas Maes employed red much, but with him it was generally of one shade only: it made a warm high light among the darkness of his picture: it was part, and an essential part, of a scheme of colour far simpler than Metsu's. But with Metsu the crudest and least agreeable shade of it—less tolerable at first than in Nicholas Maes—was generally made bearable by its elaborate surroundings of the brownish-red of furniture, the soberer red of fabrics

heavy and thick. In the end—as no observer of the colour of Titian and the colour of Veronese will need to be told—it rarely satisfies our finest sense of fitness as it does when the Venetians use it. But we feel that Metsu has accomplished a feat: he has overcome a difficulty. Now in the second Metsu of the Peel collection—*The Music Lesson*—he has hardly courted that accustomed obstacle. His colour is quieter than that in the first: the reds are cooler: there is more of grey and of blue—an indication of that "silvery tone of his later time" of which we have read, but which in the absence of many dates or other faithful guides to the exact period at which he painted most of his pictures we are wisest perhaps not to associate with any given years.

In the Buckingham Palace picture, "ce délicat Metsu" takes us to a shadowed room, into which there descends the few steps of a richly banistered staircase leading straight from a corridor, which, by means of arches at the side, communicates with the room itself and serves as a gallery for it. The architectural lines here, as often in the better Dutch dwellings, are with their dignity just sufficiently intricate to engage the eye curiously with a sense of undiscovered space and some agreeable outlet guessed at beyond: the effect still being simple

and the space not too large for cosiness and quietude. Near the foot of the stairs, at that end of the room, and in a little uncertain shadow cast by gallery or steps, sits, in front of the now silent spinnet, a gentleman playing on the violoncello. Behind and above him in the gallery or corridor—call it which we will—there leans another man of gentle birth and breeding, entranced with the music; and on the staircase—her thought of the music too arresting her, stopping her action half-way down on the descent—stands a lady with music-score in her hand. A spaniel—the favourite and petted companion—is at the foot of the stair. That is the composition, but how convey the sense of its restful unity of sentiment, its charm for mind and eye? For colour, there is the red-stockinged musician by the side of the brown-red instrument he plays upon; and golden browns of many shades predominate; cooled a little with occasional passages of grey, and harmonised by the creamy red of the lady's bodice and the yellow-white—almost a candle-light white—of her satin skirt, so beautiful in fold and sheen and glow. Near it, on the same gallery-wall in Buckingham Palace—near to so faultless an expression of the master's art—hangs the master's portrait, painted by himself. He holds in one hand a pencil, a palette,

and a maulstick, and between the fingers of the other is a piece of chalk he is all but in act to draw with. But he is at the moment looking out of the window that encloses and frames his face and figure. A man of barely middle age: the gracious head still with the free carriage and agile movement of youth and awakened spirit. A well-to do man, refined by nature and by life; clear-eyed, delicate-handed: grave and firm.

There is almost nothing known of Metsu's history. Even now, authorities generally in accord dispute the dates of his birth and of his death; but the more recent investigations justify us at all events in treating him as I have treated him here, not precisely as Terburg's contemporary, but a little as Terburg's follower. It matters not at all that Terburg outlived Metsu: he began to paint years before Metsu; and of course the thing to note, in discussing the relation, in point of time, of one man's work to that of another, is not, when did each end his work, but when did each begin it. Metsu's life was not a long one. It seems now that he was not born till 1630—fifteen years after the date of birth assigned to him in our National Gallery's Catalogue—and though it is plain that he did not die, as the old authorities believed he died, close upon 1660, it is yet almost

certain that before a decade from that time had passed he had finished his work. A very few signed pictures, during that decade, exist to attest his life as stretching later into the century. Bürger, the discoverer of the dates on certain of those pictures, inclines to think his death was in 1667. Balkema says 1669. But whatever history Metsu had is strangely gone from us; and a few dry records in the books of Guilds, a few dates upon canvasses scattered over Europe, must serve us as but sorry substitutes for the story of a life—for the narrative of such personal fortunes as befel that refined and observant artist, that sensitive man. The pictures he has left, the face he has himself recorded, point to a vivid life not scanty in intimate experience.

And indeed he was born with the privilege of a refined kindred: the son of artists, his father and his mother both being painters, there was around him from his childhood that artistic atmosphere which is an endowment to the soul fitted for it. His birthplace was Leyden. He settled for the practice of his art at Amsterdam, and there he appears to have lived out his brief and unchronicled days.

Metsu's work was less sought after and less famed

than Terburg's at the time at which he was producing it; and the work of neither was as purely popular as that of certain pettier men now less considered and destined to fall more and more into disrepute. In its own century the work of the greater Dutchmen who addressed themselves to Genre was known but in quite limited circles, and their contemporaries little guessed that the pleasant painters of the home would rank years afterwards as an unapproachable school. But it was hardly to that unconsciousness among their contemporaries of how original and great these few men were, then in the midst of them, that we can attribute the absence for several generations of any effort worthily to reproduce their pictures by the fine art of engraving. Whatever stories M. Taine may have gleaned of an intelligent baker having paid high prices for the foot or so of panel on which one or other of these sincere home artists had recorded the daily aspect of parlour or shop, there is little reason to think that Art was loved generally by any but a restricted few, though the restricted few, both in that century and in the next, happily loved it well. If, on the one hand, the work of art was not scattered amongst the people, on the other hand it had not been recognised as a necessary article of furniture and a convenient article of com-

merce. The collector who is a dealer in disguise, had not discovered his opportunity. Engraving, thus far, had but little attempted to reproduce the picture; the period was a period in which the artists, when it was question of engraving at all, were very wont to be their own interpreters. They gave not literal and elaborate renderings of their pictures, but suggestions of their ideas. The painter-etchers of the Seventeenth Century would have flourished ill in a century of pure reproduction.

But gradually, as time passed, and the works of the Dutchmen, great and small, seemed settled into permanence of fame and favour, the skilled engravers of the Eighteenth Century laboured to reproduce them. Wille's prints have generally been thought the best, and they are the most known; but there is something a little chilly in that brilliant and self-satisfied mechanism, perfect as it is in its own kind. And because it is chilly, and because it is mechanical, it fails the most when it reproduces the higher and more suggestive artists. It succeeds even marvellously with Gerard Dou and Mieris. Its tendency is to elevate them. *The Menagère* of Dou—one of Dou's prettiest things, in Buckingham Palace—Wille has touched with a fascinating delicacy. But something is wanting to his rendering of the *Conseil*

Paternel of Terburg—some warmth, some glow and richness which even the rough sketch on copper by the modern Austrian etcher, Herr Unger, has happily secured. But there were Frenchmen of the Eighteenth Century—the masters of a school of which we shall have to speak more precisely when Watteau, the master they copied, comes to be discussed—who turned aside from the then popular, and justly popular, rendering of the art of France and of their day, and gave us, here and there, and at rare intervals, the most spontaneous and spirited translations of the art of the Dutchmen.

Sometimes in France, in the Eighteenth Century, and sometimes too in its last years in England, the engraver was himself a shopkeeper or publisher—a tradesman at the head of an industry. It was thus with Basan, who issued to the public such an engraving by Lucas after Terburg as catches best the tranquil reality of Terburg's expression. It is called *Le Coup refléchi.* It is a card party. A young man is leaning sideways over a woman's chair: her head, seen from behind, is turned up at him to watch while he considers, and to listen while he advises. Opposite, at the narrow board, sits her opponent, with vivacious eyes: his face guessing the choice, and with the expectation of immediate

decision. It is a noble print. Nor can we fairly feel disappointment when it is Basan himself who works; when, as in *Le Magister Hollandais* (from Terburg also) there is indeed not much suggestion of the tone and depth of the Dutchman, but when his subtlety of expression is rendered with a free and unerring intelligence which Wille shows, I think, no sign of. The print is in the open, manly, even coarsish style of Surugue, as Surugue is seen in some only of his works; but the large lines lose nothing of the face's subtlety: the girl, so pleasant as to be almost pretty, is a little dreamy, with eyes lowered to the volume and the task; but she knows that the young tutor's hand is laid affectionately on her arm, and she has a very sweet look of gentle willingness. Terburg might here have anticipated the story of the *Nouvelle Heloïse.* His exquisite delicacy has found its best interpreter by the keen and delicate apprehension of the French artist of the burin. After Metsu there should be named a fine free line engraving, *Le Déjeuner de la Hollandaise*, by Marie Louise Ade Boizot, from one of the Duke of Choiseul's many pictures of price by the great Dutch artists. Perfectly has the engraver preserved the slow gesture of the feeding woman: no glutton: not even much attentive to the business

of the solitary meal: but meditative; her shrewd thought being a good deal elsewhere.

In England in the Eighteenth Century, and in the latter half of it especially—in the great period of mezzotint—our artists of mezzotint did not wholly neglect the prized Dutch pictures. C. H. Hodges, who, though English by name, is himself claimed in part by the Dutch School, engraved Dutch works in London: and so did a more illustrious master, James Watson—the enterprising Boydell, Alderman and Mayor, being his publisher. Nor did either of these artists wholly fail; but their method was adapted far better to the reproduction of contemporary work—to the large loose touch of our great masters of portraiture. The fame of Watson is associated with the fame of Reynolds; and it is to the French line engraving of the Eighteenth Century that we have still to look for the most intelligent and the most accomplished translation of the wit, the character, the art, of the greater Dutchmen.

JAN STEEN.

1626–1679.

The Dutch artists of the great Seventeenth Century looked at life widely, but none of them, save Rembrandt, so widely as did Jan Steen. He was a moralist too great to be much occupied with his moral: occupied with the record of the life into which he keenly entered, he observed and painted, painted and observed. Nothing was closed to him. Dusart kept himself to the tavern, and if Adrian van Ostade left it, it was rarely for more exalted company. He betook himself to the shadowed hovel or the cottagé door; and he painted gentlefolk, when he painted them at all, not in their hours of leisure, but in professional work: the doctor in his study, the lawyer in his office. Metsu, on the other hand, was the artist of the parlour—the painter of the middle-class, the painter of the comfortable. Terburg, as we have seen, was more especially the painter of the rich, the polite assistant at family ceremonies, the recorder even of historic scenes—

diplomatists in solemn and wily conclave—the chronicler of august features, and of the jewels and sheen on the raiment of the noble. Large, very likely, was the society open to these men—large, but not so various. Jan Steen went everywhere. At home in the kitchen, at home at the feast, he followed the thoughts and ways of men in tavern and parlour. He photographed debauchery. He knew the depths of the abandoned. He was so refined that the subtlest and most changeful expressions of the sweetest and most meditative face became possessions of his memory, and were placed with finest accuracy on his canvas. He knew the humours of little children.

And yet Jan Steen in his own lifetime was not much appreciated. A few things of his got into good collections—were slipped in there, indulgently, it may be, by some far-seeing man with a sly liking for them, but were never reckoned, by those to whom the collector showed his treasures, as of great account. Metsu, whom at moments Jan Steen resembled, obtained sufficient prices. The elder and better Mieris, Jan Steen's old friend, was rewarded liberally. Steen worked much, and worked for little; lacking highly placed advocates and the art of social success.

Fifty years after his death there came what has proved to be but the beginning of the change. The value of his pictures, small enough to begin with, had already doubled. Appreciation grew. Afterwards Sir Joshua praised him, and his pictures were a little sought for here. Then Leslie, with a happier and lighter touch in criticism—Leslie, with the art of saying delicately what he had thought out keenly—took up the tale, and gave us in the book which his modesty chose to name "A Handbook for Young Painters" what is really the best, though about the briefest, estimate that the Dutch School has had in England. Afterwards, a moment of reaction. The immense critic, whose capital mistake it has been to be blind to any excellence in the art of Holland, saw nothing but evil in our Dutchman's "Human Comedy." The recent academical criticism has taken, though in all sincerity, its note from the error of genius. How shall the deaf hear? And now, as art of most kinds—in novels, in comedies, in the art of sculpture, in Daudet's story, Dumas' play, the group of Carpeaux, the figure of Dalou—turns to the search of expression pathetic or humorous in the present and the actual, and accepts the Nineteenth Century, there is sure to be an ever readier sympathy with the art of the great

Dutchmen who accepted their own time and pourtrayed it.

And who pourtrayed it better than Jan Steen? He recoiled from no coarseness, yet rose to the rendering of the sweetest. Unlike too many of his fellows, while seeing details keenly, he saw the whole widely. The cunning of his hand never betrayed him into concentrating interest on the trivial accessory. He did not paint men for the sake of textures, but textures for the sake of men. He observed life, while others observed satin. And to his observation of life, Jan Steen, too sympathetic to be distant and unmoved, brought his own spirit of gentle and genial and tolerant philosophy. He has painted himself in the near background of some of his pictures, smoking his meditative pipe, while looking with a half-humorous sadness, a half-sad enjoyment (as of one who knows), at the enacted scene of folly or pleasure. He is well within reach —may even rise—abandon pipe and meditation. That is exactly his own position in the life and world which for thirty years he pourtrays. He feels that the figures he has made to dance are no puppets of his handling, but his own flesh and blood. He is not aloof and elevated, but can cry his own *peccavi*! Some of the chroniclers of our follies and errors, of

our transient pleasures and baffled ways, scorn us a little superfluously from the lonely heights to which they are somehow translated. But Steen was Molière rather than Swift, Balzac rather than George Eliot. To the last he suffered under no bitter persuasion of the worthlessness of the chase he depicted.

To know Jan Steen you must know him in Holland. It is not that England possesses none of his greatest works. We are rich in his pictures; but—save perhaps in the collection of the Duke of Wellington—they are scattered. In Holland they are concentrated, and two days' sight of them shows not only Steen's highest excellence, but nearly the whole of his variety. But first for such few details of his life as can be given with accuracy, Steen having suffered in common with several of the better artists, little valued in their own day, from the lack of any trustworthy chronicle. Nor indeed are those who were already famous wholly exempt from this calamity. Of adequate records there are few, and as against the earlier Italians there is for Vasari only Houbraken. Vasari gossipped, Vasari told strange tales, but in comparison with Houbraken he is a serious historian. And yet for generations, for want of something

better, Houbraken has been accepted. The later writers generally copied him; even the latest have to allow that their best work in matters of fact does but enable them to check the *raconteur*—to apply here and there a sufficient test to the popular gossip. Rembrandt's life, of course, is an exception. On that Scheltema and Vosmaer, with infinite labour, have managed to throw light.

Nor has Jan Steen been without his grave historian. M. van Westrheene had, it seems, the hope that investigations would give him the material for a book, but as the investigations did nothing of the kind, he wrote the book without the material. The endeavour was courageous, but the result dull. Gifted with no power of literary expression—with no vivid thought, no word that remains in the mind—gifted, moreover, with no exceptional insight into the qualities of works of Art, the respectable M. van Westrheene toiled through his hundred pages to but small purpose. The discovery of a couple of dates—important ones, for which we should be seriously grateful—was not enough to give sustained interest to his work, and the rest of its value must be sought in the long *catalogue raisonné* of the paintings of the master, with much of which Smith, in his colossal volumes, had preceded the Dutch writer.

Almost the only genuine spontaneous contribution to our understanding of Jan Steen, made within the last twenty years, is that made by Bürger, in his "Musées de la Hollande." Charles Blanc, throughout the two numbers of "Les Peintres de toutes les Ecoles" devoted to Jan Steen, had but neatly repeated the older gossip, and his publisher's sagacity had accompanied it with illustrations which convey nothing but the spiritless skeleton of the picture they are meant to recall. In the matter of reproduction by illustration, Jan Steen has fared as badly as in the matter of biography. Wille, as one of the most brilliant line engravers of the Eighteenth Century, might, notwithstanding the mechanical perfection to which he pressed his work, have recorded some image of Jan Steen not quite unworthy. But now the fine point of a great reproductive etcher is wanted to multiply for many the charm of the observant work.

It has been said that Jan Steen fared so ill in life that he had to be brewer and publican as well as painter. It seems true that he was a brewer and only gossip that he was a publican. He came of a family of brewers. His grandfather was a brewer. His father carried on the same business at Leyden, and

must have found it moderately profitable, for such record as there is of him shows his place to have been with the comfortable class, and into that place Jan Steen was born—destined, very likely, not always to keep it. Some special aptitude for design or painting must have shown itself early with the boy, for there seems to have been no question at first of making a brewer of him. Born in 1626, he studies loosely, it is believed, under at least one insignificant teacher, but comes, in or about the year 1644, to Haarlem, to profit by the lessons of Adrian van Ostade, whose fame, made early in that city, is now spreading itself, though it has not as yet induced him to settle triumphantly in Amsterdam. Resemblances there are, in technical quality, between Ostade's work and Steen's which make probable the statement of Weyerman that the one learnt directly of the other. Had Jan Steen been himself a less consummate artist, I, for my part, should have doubted the history. But an individuality so marked and great as Steen's can come into the closest contact with another talent while preserving the whole of its own, and with Steen himself that was the case; for, occasional technicalities apart, no works can less resemble each other than the works of these two, and no two men of the same time and land could

have set themselves to paint more different types, in a more different spirit. What is sure is that Jan Steen, still young, transferred himself to Jan van Goijen, a sober and reticent master, under whose seeming monotony of expression in brown and grey there is a great reserve of knowledge. "See," said an artist of our own century—a colourist—a leader of the landscape school of France—Théodore Rousseau, as he stood with a pupil before a work of that last master of Jan Steen's, "this man does not need colour to give the idea of distance;" and, looking a little more at the sober harmony of browns, he added, "If necessary, you can do without colour, but you can do nothing without harmony"—words of no subtlety of wisdom—obvious enough to those who know—but they express the lesson which Jan Steen himself, like that great modern artist, found written in the work of Jan van Goijen. He learnt from Jan van Goijen a severe lesson in tone.

Margaret van Goijen, the master's daughter, became Steen's wife. The marriage was clearly a love-match, arranged and brought about by the two in the first eagerness of youth—a match not unaccompanied by scandal, gossip the chroniclers of that day. However that may have been, all was made good; friendly relations lasted to the end

between Steen and the father-in-law, and Steen's hand painted the figures in one at least of the old man's latest works, fifteen years after the shiftless and thriftless youth had robbed van Goijen of his daughter. Another daughter of van Goijen became the second wife of Adrian van Ostade; and thus there came about some natural and family connection, hardly perhaps sufficiently remembered when it is sought to show the influence of Ostade on the work of Steen.

After Steen's marriage there began a double life. Already, in 1648, he had entered the Corporation of Painters at Leyden; and doubtless selling what he could of his works there, where were his old associations and the earliest of his professional comrades, he yet appears to have sought at Delft the more substantial profits of the old family trade. But he sought it with half a heart. At Delft we find, amidst all the entanglements of his story, Steen became a brewer. He was a painter none the less; giving to his art, as the great array of his pictures must prove to us, nearly the whole of his serious hours. Four children were born to him, two of whom, there is good reason to believe, were fond enough of Art to pursue it. While Steen was yet at Delft, Margaret died. He came back

finally to Leyden, was much with his own family again, and if we are to trust old stories and the record of one at least of his pictures (*Les Amours de Jan Steen*), he was prompted by his sister, a nun, to marry for his second wife a widow of a bookseller, one Marie van Egmont. By her he seems to have had another child, but all authentic details are absolutely wanting. To search much after the circumstances of Jan Steen's life, except among his pictures, is a groping in the dark. Little more is to be known, but that he—a Roman Catholic to the end, on whom his creed sat lightly—died in 1679, in his own inherited house, in his native city; a man of adventurous and difficult life and unappreciated art; a man never rich certainly, yet, dying in his own house, clearly at the last not so very indigent. And whether poor or not sometimes in money, rich always in the understanding and enjoyment of the world around him, and in the consummate practice of his craft. A brother painter (Karel de Moor), young when Steen was old, said towards the end of his long life that he had never forgotten how well Jan Steen had talked to him of Art—a man of high and keen intelligence; a man of great sensitiveness, who, even with Ostade for master and companion, became alive to the most fleeting visions of beauty and the

last graces of style. Life—all at least but the most intimate—must have been pleasant in the company of a wit so caustic yet so genial. He knew too much to be intolerant—had too much sympathy with many characters to be monotonous—and as he went about his old world-town of Leyden in his daily ways, passed under its arched and ancient gateway, crossed its canals tree-planted, or stood at house-doors on the street, where humble groups lingered in summer, or talked to folk through open windows that disclosed the parlours of the prosperous, one thinks some faces must have brightened—faces not alone of dullard and boor, for the tales of his own daily drunkenness must be set aside;—no drunkard ever accomplished so immense a work—but of children such as he has painted in *St. Nicholas* and *Twelfth Night*, of girls at their music-making, of grave men in leisure hours.

The great artist is weakest in his grasp of divine things. Keener than so many of the Dutchmen, so much less gross, so far more sensitive to human beauty, the spirit of Jan Steen has this in common with that of the poorest of them: he is feeble, he is powerless, when he sets himself to the treatment of religious themes, unless he can so treat them as to

ignore their religious significance. It is not that like Rembrandt he needs, to be very real, to inspire himself with the suffering and sorrow of the miserable in Amsterdam—it is not that then he can give a new fidelity to the representation of subjects otherwise outworn. It is that his art is of his world and century, and comedy always; comedy high, broad, or low, vulgar or gentle, but always comedy, even when it rises to remonstrance or reproof, or brings tears as easily as laughter. Therefore his religious pictures, when he paints them at all, are not religious, but biblical. He grasps his scene with an intense imagination, but with an imagination of the earth alone. He paints the stories that he understands: Bathsheba become aware of David's love; the Prodigal Son one stage earlier than that of his return. If he ventures on miracle, miracle sinks into nothing. Of his sacred works, presumably the greatest is the *Marriage Feast at Cana*.* The divine guest is of little account; Jan Steen has concentrated himself on the joys of the feast, and not on the mere greediness of it, but on the heartiness of pleasure, the outflow of geniality, the social effervescence and facile goodwill of each man to his neighbour, befitting the occasion. In the colour, in the grouping, Teniers, presenting

* In the possession of the Duke d'Arenberg, at Brussels.

that story, would have equalled Steen, and possibly surpassed him. Steen is not greatest in colour—there Metsu is preferable. But in dramatic movement, in varied and rich expression, in truth to a low ideal—the ideal of Dutch reality—Steen is not to be outdone. Never before was the thing painted with such a relish in the serving, eating, drinking, and embraces which succeed. Never such a plenty in the dishes, such a passing of glasses, such a serious daylong settlement to the business of the feast. Nor is this Dutch art alone in the absence of religious significance. On a church wall in Venice * a great Venetian has painted the same scene. The persons shown are comparatively few. One behind another, large and near, in irregular line along the side of a receding table, a row of girl guests—the fairest figures of the Venetian's daily meeting—speak, smile, or bend to listen with exquisite rhythmic movement and splendid and gracious ease. Well, you would choose to be of Tintoret's company, but no face there suggests the divine and the miraculous any more than in the Dutchman's. And as to beauty, Jan Steen is not dull to such scanty and rare show of it as is there for his recording; but sensitive rather, as much as the more fortunate amidst his wealth. Here in the foreground a happy

* In the sacristy of Santa Maria della Salute.

child busily rolls a wine cask; there, in the pleasant light of the distance, a slender serving-girl, laden with jar and candlestick, looks over her shoulder—mounts the stair.* And Steen has lost neither the lively freshness of the one nor the unconcerned grace of the other. And the draperies and raiment of his choice lie here as often beside, in folds and lines of simple elegance and dignity.

Above all others of the Dutchmen, Jan Steen is the painter of the charm of youth and of the dignity of active age. There is his weak point, the limit of his interest—age must be active, or at least capable, if he is to pourtray it with sympathy. In his pictures, the grandfather, still alert, watches the play of the child; a hale old woman is busy with domestic work; an elderly doctor, upright and active, noble of gesture, clear and keen in thought, holds his patient's hand with a father's solicitude. These are figures of comedy still, and their place is a fine one in the work of Steen. But for the capacity that is beginning to wane, for the years that now in the steady coming of decrepitude draw more and more about them the tenderness of youth, for the age for which the hour of helplessness has struck, Jan Steen has nothing to say. Rembrandt followed with subtle

* *Marriage Feast* in D'Arenberg Gallery.

record, on canvas or etching, the slow passage, through its last years, of a life chiefly fulfilled and accomplished. For him the stoop of Sylvius, the garrulous smile of Lutma, the weariness of De Jonghe, the bitter acceptance—which is hardly resignation—of his mother with folded hands.* Nor were some of Rembrandt's scholars without this feeling for the aged—this sense of the interest art may have in the fag end of life and experience—which in modern work I know only in Legros. Flinck painted the very old, and a greater than Flinck—Nicholas Maes—had for his habitual subject the worn and solitary woman's figure that bends over the spinning-wheel—the resigned loneliness of the aged in humble and dark places where no great things have ever been hoped for. But Steen was for the sunlight of prosperity, in tavern or parlour.

Thus perhaps it is that his conception of children is altogether lighter and happier than that of his brethren. Most of the Dutch painters painted children, but had no place for child life. Around them it hardly seems to have existed. One of them, and strange to say it was Steen's master, Adrian van Ostade, drew infancy and childhood not only ill-shaped, button-nosed, short-necked, stumpy and

* *La Mère de Rembrandt au voile noir.*

square—for most of them did that—but weary of soul already; already sad and bitter of experience. Into these dwarfish figures, these pigmy denizens of the hovel and drinking-shop, there has entered already the mark of a life dull, grovelling, and bestial. They were born vulgar, and they were born old. The others—Peter de Hooch amongst them—painted the children early broken into domestic ways; dutifully fulfilling their little share of the cares of the household; small replicas of their mother, gravely careful, as she would be, of the beer or milk jug they are trusted to carry. Generally in Dutch art they take life seriously. In Dutch art, elders and betters may be moved to mirth by song or fiddle—it is not the children that are merry. Jan Steen is an exception. The child in Jan Steen's pictures has found no task in life. If he rolls a wine cask at the feast, it is merely because it chances to be there and he is vivaciously active. But he has nothing to say to the pursuits of his elders—the world of his own thoughts is leagues away.

With this happy carelessness Jan Steen has joined great physical charm. His are often the prettiest children that we have known since the Renaissance, and their arch liveliness might almost be of France, and of the Eighteenth Century. They have the grace

of St. Aubin's, and are a hundred times more individual and various. Look, for instance, at the child that tumbles over the candles in the Queen's picture of *Twelfth Night*. Better still, in Amsterdam, see the *Saint Nicholas*. It is the children's fête, the day of the Dutch Santa Claus, when the child faces, strained with expectancy, since these are the great moments, the crises of life to the imagination of young children, become suddenly radiant with fulfilled delight. Here is a girl-child, laden with new toys; her expression is exquisite. And then the liveliness of the elder girl, and the heavenly, glad-hearted merriment of the open-mouthed singing boy that is behind the chair. You have no purer, no more vivacious, no more manly painter of children's joy.

And the charm of adolescence and young womanhood! Painters of pretty faces generally weary us. They are wedded commonly to one order of prettiness, if they have made any type at all thoroughly their own. And their sweets cloy. Only the very greatest Italians, and, out of Italy, Watteau and Jan Steen, can keep us permanently interested in the young women of their art. In Italy—with Raphael, Titian, Tintoret—the highest and most perfect types have been realised for ever; the charm of imperfection is

Watteau's and Jan Steen's. They give you irregular and unforeseen beauties: vivacity and alert intelligence—these without stint; fleeting graces of light and colour; gracious attitudes; a piquant gesture of mutiny, relaxing unexpectedly into a smile of submission. It is the art of Watteau and of Steen to express changefulness. In their faces they paint not only life but moments of life, and so suggest to you, if you understand them at all, other moments that have gone before, and quite different ones that will come after.

Not that Jan Steen is wholly regardless of permanent beauty of form. The better built of the Dutch figures, men and women alike, are to be found in his work: a head well poised, a figure lithe, svelte, and erect; they are not uncommon with him. See our illustration from Lord Ellesmere's gallery; it is here because of the figure of the woman, which in its robust grace, its dignity, its splendid balance, is the spirit of classic art brought into humble life and into the art of Holland. And what perfection of form Steen does draw, he draws—be sure—with the daintiest draughtsmanship. No touch is lighter, more vivacious, more assured. But generally that certain and vivacious touch is needed to record the charm of the imperfect and the faulty—the form in which

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Jan Steen

some happy success of Nature is side by side with her failure; just the interest of every day humanity, and nothing more; the actual and the not too good. Here,* in one of those scenes between physician and patient which Steen, with a surgeon for intimate friend, delighted to depict—here, receiving the visit of the doctor, and awaiting its result, but suffering, it would seem, from no organic disease, a browny-blond girl, in pink and white bed-dress, occupies Steen's brush. With formless nose perhaps, and a mouth not noticeable till some arch and intelligent smile kindles and expands it, she would hardly be pretty at all but for chance points of pleasantness to cover the imperfections—a turn of the elbow, a light on the hair, Anne Page's "eyes of youth." Here, again, in the Museum of the Hague,† is the charm of youth also, less robust, but heightened by an expression of the most tender plaintiveness and almost childish languor. For concentration of sentiment in the face of the girl, this, amongst his medicine scenes, is one of the most admirable. But it is equalled in interest, and excelled in subtlety, by one other, which is in Amsterdam.‡ Again a

* In M. Steengracht's collection, at the Hague, and at the Museum of the Hague.

† No. 136. *Un Médecin tâtant le pouls à une jeune fille.*

‡ In the Van der Hoop collection.

physician feeling a pulse—strange secrets in the pulses of the heroines of Steen!—but the room this time is at least a lady's, grave and ordered in its simple dignity, which accords well with the gesture, gaze, and carriage of the serious old-world doctor, on whose experienced face is consideration and respect. What is the secret of the pulse? The invalid, robed in a brownish-yellow satin, with blue slippers peeping from below, sits in an arm-chair, the figure bending freely over to the right, and the head, with white wrappings, pillowed on white pillow at a table by the chair-side. At the wise man's intimation, a subtle and dreamy pleasure wins its slow way over a tired face, like a diffused and passing light—the record of it highest among Jan Steen's records of expression, and so among the greatest feats I know in Art.

In the comedy of Jan Steen, as in the comedy of life, there is room generally for the curious spectator. He gives the condiment to the dish of satire—is the vehicle for the artist's caustic wit, and expresses his moral. Perhaps, as in one *Médecin tâtant le pouls à une jeune fille*, it is a servant who passes slowly in the background, her attention not quite absorbed by menial duties, her lips lifted in a satirical smile. Perhaps, as in a scene of orgie, in the Van der Hoop collection, it is the paid musicians, who, their work

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done, pass out behind with grimaces of intelligent tolerance. Alas! their betters are no better than themselves. Or, it is a servant listening at a half-opened door, while within the quiet chamber a cavalier gives a lady a guitar lesson, with pauses like to Paolo's and Francesca's, when "in that book they read no more that day." Or it is a scene—the lowest perhaps that Jan Steen's adventurous and exploring steps ever led him to—a scene of *Bad Company*,* in which a simple youth, a little drunk and heavy, is entrapped by harlots, one of whom robs him of his watch while he, with open mouth, sleeps upon her knee. A hideous hag, in league with the marauder, receives the stolen goods. Broken bits from a feast lie on the board. A fiddler fiddles still merrily from behind, and one sad face of a philosophic smoker, prudently removed from the action of the piece, points its Hogarthian moral.

It is not all scenes—happily!—that need such spectators; two masterpieces at the Hague are quite without them. In one of them there is Steen himself, surrounded by his family, and taking his part in the pleasures of the home. It is painted in large style, and in the middle, Jan Steen, at a not

* Sold in the Levy collection for 997*l.* A kindred picture, of the finest composition, is in the Museum of Berlin.

empty board, sits, a sharp, witty, happy observer, his face screwed up with merry appreciation of the innocent gambols around. In the other, a scene in an inn, which has nevertheless and justifiably been known as *The Picture of Human Life*, many persons, and of all ages and various ranks, are assembled in a large guest-room. From the old man who takes such pleasure in the child (and he is the grandfather of the preceding picture), to the child who takes pleasure in the favourite caged bird, all are there. Family love is represented—naturally, incidentally, in no didactic strain; work is represented; idleness; the isolation of the self-absorbed; the old man, whose own best life is now in the fresher life of his kindred; the dullard, whose adoration is the beer-pot and who is now completely and contentedly occupied with that alone. Grace and bustle of arrangement, fertility in happy invention, cannot go any further. Here, too, as in the serving-girl who kneels at the hearth squeezing lemon into oysters for the feast, is Steen's vivacious and firm beauty of contour; here, in a brown damsel, happy with brilliant eyes, who listens but lazily to the protestations of her gallant, is not the worst of his so varied types of womanhood.

But for concentration of vivacity in girls' expression, one must see the *Oyster Girl* at M. Sir

Van Hillegom's: in execution, a gem of sharp cutting; with the influence of Mieris, I suppose, and done perhaps with hopeful glance at Mieris' prices, but with how much more than his charm! What a revel of appetite! yet never coarse, as some of Steen's things were coarse, being painted, in a day when the point was hardly yet established, where, in that new realistic art, reticence must needs begin. Not coarse at all, but the best conceivable realisation of a healthy and innocent zest. Five inches by seven, yet never petty in one touch, because the pleasant lighting and the happy malice, the coquetry of the face, and its invincible relish of life and the moment, dominate over the detail.

Now and then Steen's technical methods approach to Metsu, as here, in the *Oyster Girl*, they have been near to Mieris. That is chiefly when he paints a subject characteristically Metsu's—a parlour of the opulent; rich hangings, eastern table-cloth, velvet chairs, Cordova wall leathers, and the inlaid spinnet. An example is in our own National Gallery: a fair thing, certainly, yet wholly insufficient as sole representative there of the varied and inexhaustible work. When this does chance, that Steen passes on to Metsu's ground, he is perfectly at home there. Somehow an unsuspected liveliness has lurked in the

sober and fine parlour; an unwonted subtlety, and a rare and intimate truth, as of moments that really pass and stories that really happen, gather into faces charged by the keener artist with more than Metsu's life.

OSTADE, TENIERS, AND BREKELENKAMP.

Adrian van Ostade wanted nothing but a soul to make him one of the immortal masters. He was an absolutely perfect craftsman, who excelled in the technical practice of every branch of art that he attempted; he was as completely accomplished in the newer work of water-colour drawing as in the more familiar business of oil painting, and his handling of the etching needle displayed in its proper turn his unerring skill. The resources of colour, of composition, and of light and shade were entirely at his command. He was born to express himself in pictorial design, and what he expressed most perfectly was his keen and consummate observation of the worst instincts of men. And this can hardly surprise us when we are accustomed to his face. Peaked and narrow, his face has hardly even the virtue of fine bodily health, though he lives in dreary self-contentment to full old age. His thin lips are tightly closed; cold and cynical. The penetrating hardness of his small eyes, foxy of

hue, relaxes never, it seems, into kindness or geniality. He is of faultless selfishness: the concert of evil within him broken in upon and disturbed by no stray discord of good. All is harmony and satisfied order within his little kingdom of the bad. So at least one reads the unfortunate face.

And yet a couple of centuries have rightly done justice to the technical perfection of his work; and he was too brilliant an observer and too shrewd a recorder to have wholly sacrificed the quality of giving people pleasure by his art. Much of his work we look at now with patience, and some of it with praise.

The facts of his life have nearly all been wrongly narrated. Only recent investigation—and that chiefly of M. Van der Willigen, the results of which are set forth in "Les Artistes d'Haarlem"—has led to the discovery of his true birthplace. It was perhaps the grossness of the laughter of his art—a thing so different from the genial and flowing coarseness of certain of his brethren—that made men fancy that he was not of Dutch birth. But he was not born, as men have said, at Lübeck. Ostade was not a German.

Adrian van Ostade's father was a citizen and tradesman of Haarlem, and there, into the bourgeois

world, Ostade was born, in 1610, in the month of December. There, in 1685, he died. Showing, no doubt, his faculties early, he was made a pupil of Franz Hals, but never in the subjects of his choice, and only rarely in his treatment, does he recall the summary work of that profound and audacious master. He follows his own way: developes for himself an order of skill of which his first teacher had no need—imitates rather than interprets—aims more at precision than freedom. A member, in due time, of the Guild of S. Luke—the famous society at Haarlem to which the better part of the great Dutch artists and art craftsmen at one time or other belonged—he entered into the full companionship of painters. He was fittingly Brauwer's comrade. And he married, as Jan Steen did, a daughter of Jan van Goijen. In 1662—instead of having at that time, as the older stories told us, finally quitted the town for Amsterdam—he was still at Haarlem, and occupying a conspicuous place in the affairs of the Guild. Students came to learn from a practitioner so skilled as Ostade, and Ostade, having been the companion of Brauwer, formed Dusart and Bega, and so is shown to have been connected as by every link with all the coarsest brutalities to which Dutch art has stooped. Even the finer genius of Jan Steen did not

escape, as we have noticed, the potent and pernicious influence—the poison that was in the air. Isaac, the younger brother of Ostade, was also his pupil. But Isaac's subjects were but seldom those of his kinsman and teacher. He seems to have gone on early to Amsterdam, and practised chiefly there that more agreeable and innocuous art of the stable, the inn door, and the field, in which sometimes he anticipated our English Morland. But Isaac lacked the vitality of Adrian, and, though eleven years younger, died in 1657. At that time Adrian, though in the tide of success, was still far from the days when his ever energetic nature would prompt him to the cultivation of new methods. Adrian was an accomplished artist in oil-painting and etching: it was only in old age that he became a master in water colour. In 1673 and 1674 appear the finest known examples of his work in that newer medium—examples happily now placed in England, in the great collections of Mr. Malcolm of Poltalloch and Mr. Cook.

When we see how the Dutch practised water colour, we find that they were the first to use it in a manner not only tentative and occasional, like Dürer, but often familiar and accomplished as our own, of our great last generation. Rembrandt himself made coloured sketches: at least coloured

sketches assigned to him on what seems good foundation exist in the collections of the British Museum and of Monsieur J. de Vos, a veteran collector at Amsterdam; and at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, in the spring exhibition of 1878, there was shown, from Mr. Seymour Haden's collection, the sketch of a city gate—a sketch in which line counted for little, and the effect was sought and gained by tender gradations of tinting in monochrome. In landscape De Koninck came nearest to Rembrandt, and he used his orange-browns in water colour with subtle variation, to pourtray his wonted effects of infinite distance. Colour, or, it may be, a wash of sepia, used by Rembrandt and by De Koninck chiefly to suggest distance or tone, was used by Berghem more often to suggest the pleasantness and warmth of sunlight which were so precious to him, and were the charm of his art. Berghem's artificial but agreeable landscape of ordered valley and well-disposed mountain and happy peasant of the opera is represented perfectly in England, in drawings safely housed by Mr. Malcolm and Mr. Holford—delicately coloured designs, airy and sunny almost as his best paintings, and much, it seems, to be noticed not only for the extreme rarity of such work in water colour at that time and by that master, but also for its foretaste of

the subtlety with which our own great art of water colour learned, so many generations afterwards, to reach atmospheric effect.

But it was in the painting of interiors that the resources of the art of water colour were destined to be used most fully by the Dutchmen, and they were only used most fully in the old age of Berghem and after the death of Rembrandt, when Adrian van Ostade, himself now old, was perhaps as much at Amsterdam as Haarlem, and they were used best by this master of ignoble conception and often repulsive work. The special virtues of Ostade, accomplished management of light and shade, and faultless composition of mean subjects—an instinct, that is, for the spacing out, the perfectly balanced filling, the never crowding, of his given area of paper or panel—have long ago been acknowledged; and his sense of beauty in colour, and beauty indeed sometimes in line in the humble forms of inanimate things, has gone far to atone for that vulgar indifference to charm of figure and face, common indeed to many of the Dutchmen, but Ostade's in exceptional degree. Mr. Malcolm's drawings, and one of Mr. Cook's, show him once for all the consummate practitioner of a branch of art the precedence in which—the invention of which, almost—our own country has

liked to claim. Rich and mellow, tender and luminous, beyond all that has thus far been acknowledged was the great work of Ostade in his old age in the English art of water colour. Dusart followed him in elaboration of work, but not in harmony—not at all in felicitous adaptation of means to the end.

Ostade's brilliant water colours, unspoilt, undamaged, are rare, while of oil paintings it is reckoned that he made some three or four hundred. They meet us everywhere, in every great collection of the skilled Dutch work; and, as no fine imagination ever inspired him—no generous impulse, I take it, ever prompted his invention—the level he reached does not so greatly vary that we need seek him at the Hague instead of in London; or here, say, rather than there. He is the painter of many pictures finished and sufficient. He is not the painter of a masterpiece. But did we need to single out examples at least desirable for study, it may be that we should think first of such pictures as *Le Ménétrier* in the Moritzhuis at the Hague—a most brilliant and luminous panel, crowded, as needs must be in Ostade's village pictures, with the habitual assemblage of hateful types—or, again, of such a picture as that at Bridgewater House, of the old

lawyer to whom, in his business chamber, a somewhat fearful client brings an offering of game.

But the mind of Ostade and the whole character of his work can best be seen in his etchings. There are fifty of these. There is *The Tavern Dance* and there is *Rustic Courtship*—where "the males pursue the females." There is *The Family*—where "the female gives suck to her young." But then again there is *The Painter*, in which is well expressed the calm pursuit of labour for labour's sake: there is *The Spectacle Seller*—a suburban incident depicted with point and simplicity. In the *Peasant Family saying Grace* there is a homely piety, though the types of course are poor, and with no natural dignity: the father as sheep-like a parent as ever fostered his young, and accepted without struggle or question that succession of dull days of which his life is made. Of all the etchings, at least of all the smaller plates, I find the *Peasant Paying his Reckoning* the finest and most fascinating. It is not here the bliss of boozing that is primarily thought about, but the effect of the interior—the departing peasant who fumbles for his coin, the watchful hostess, the still abiding guests. How good the space and cosy the accessories: the leisure, how delightful! A tavern indeed, but somehow glorified by that art of delicate

perception, of dexterous execution. And then from this we are back again among the gluttonous and beer-bibbers (Bartsch, 50)—a group of kindred delighting in and commending to each other this drink and that: this and that savoury mouthful that fitly crowns with sensual jollity the dull task of the monotonous day.

Take Adrian van Ostade out of doors, and he is a little better. In open air, somehow, he is less grossly animal. Not that in presence of a wide landscape and far reaching vista there is any hopefulness in him. His own vista is bounded as before. It is not the landscape that he sees with his mind, but the near pursuit of the peasant by the roadside, the peasant by the bridge. *The Fishers*, two boys with old men's faces, bend over the bridge's railings, and above them hangs a grey Dutch sky, dreary as their lives. A wide landscape says nothing to Ostade. It is too great for him—he is never concerned with the infinite in any way. But just outside the cottage door—on the bench, within easy reach of ale-house tap—he and his work are happiest and best. Here is evoked such sense of beauty as he is dowered with by the gods, who are never profuse to him—such sense of beauty as the conditions of his Netherlands life and stunted northern nature have

enabled him to keep and cultivate. Thus, in *La Fête sous la Treille* we have some charm of open-air life, much movement, some vivacity, and here and there a gleam of grace. In the group of *The Charlatan* there is some dramatic interest, and there are characters more varied than he is wont to present. But as we have seen him in his interiors alive to the picturesqueness of litter—sprawling brush and pot and saucer, and strewn cards upon the floor—so let us take leave of him in recognising that he was alive also to the picturesqueness of Nature, when that was shown in little things of quite familiar appearance, and alive too, now and again, to such picturesqueness as men can make. The last he proves by the care and thought and delicacy he bestows on the often prominent quaint lines of diamond-patterned casements; and the first, by the lightness and sensitiveness of his touch when he draws the leaf and tendril of the vine by the house-wall, as it throws its slight cool shadow on the rustic bench, or curls waywardly into the now open window, through which there glances for a moment (brief indeed in Ostade's life) a little of the happy sunshine of De Hooch.

Teniers, like Ostade, is the painter of the boor,

but of the boor more often in his hours of joy. His revelries, like Ostade's, are revelries of ugliness, but he is more familiar than his fellow with the expression of pleasure on mean features and the abandonment of the body to a drunken delight. Also he paints from time to time not only the debauch of popular festivities—which no one perhaps has painted so much or so well—but the humbler and more decent merry-making of family occasions; the jollities always of the vulgar, but still sometimes of the modest. For good and bad, his sympathies in Art were with the people, and there was never a people of whom Montesquieu's word was truer than of those of the Netherlands—"Le bas est le sublime." The subjects of Teniers in his Genre painting, and the models that he chose, can never of themselves give pleasure. The animation of his crowd, whether in the orgie of the Kermesse or in the rustic dance at wedding festival, must atone as best it can for the commonness of each individual type. There is no face nor figure in all the crowd to gladden the eye. The crowd may be joyous in mood, but in type, if not actually in its pursuits, it is always debased, so that the lover of such art as deals with beautiful things cannot wonder over much at the phrase of the Great Monarch who, when the creatures

of Teniers' pencil were brought in amidst his magnificence, desired that they might be promptly removed —"Otez-moi ces magots-là."

But the monarch did not know how to do justice to the truth and skill with which that crowd of human maggots was realised. Familiar too much with the art that before all things will be pretty, he saw no virtue in an art that before all things would be veracious. Yet it can hardly be demanded of any man now-a-days that he shall find particular joy in the Genre painting of Teniers; too much of art not only more immediately fascinating, but more justly and abidingly attractive, is brought within his ken; but he may be asked at all events to give Teniers his due—to recognise the truth of the type, the unceasing industry in the seizure of the thousand individuals that belong to it; the marshalling of these squat figures into combined movements of harmony, even of fire and grace; the frequent and goodly sobriety of tone; the occasional brilliancy and flush of colour.

In execution, the work of Teniers is perhaps at its best in the signed pictures of his middle period. Unlike Ostade, he decayed in his old age. And his execution, in his best time, appears of two orders. His work could display the always prized quality of dainty precision—of almost accurately imitative re-

production—or it could possess the broader suggestiveness of an interpretation large and free. Compromises are there also between the two methods, such as in the picture of the market gardener—the gardener with his barrow—shown at Burlington House in 1877, and recognised then as fresh and excellent in its kind. Execution, indeed, whether of the most elaborate or of the freest and the sketchiest, is that in which the strength of Teniers has generally been seen. Sir Joshua even says that "his manner of touching has, perhaps, never been equalled: there is in his pictures that exact mixture of softness and sharpness which it is difficult to execute." Nor will the visitor to our National Gallery care to deny this, if he stops before the bright little figure of *The Toper*—one of the lightest and breeziest of character sketches *—or before the *Boors Regaling*, with its background figures sharp, detached, like figures in a frieze, so careful, so composed in outline and arrangement as was Teniers' wont; or before the figures of *The Seasons*, with their rare truth to nature in its pleasantness. And then, amongst so many others, there is the *Paysage avec*

* It is signed I know with that T within a D which is accounted generally the signature of the less famous father; but it is ascribed nevertheless to Teniers the younger, who is thought to have not always been careful to distinguish his own from his parent's work.

une Maison Rustique in the Van der Hoop Museum, the famous *Bonne Cuisine* of the Museum of the Hague—a Teniers painted on copper, and in the style of complete yet not mean realisation habitually extolled; there is *The Guard Room*, with its unwonted differences of lighting—the distance from gate to courtyard, from courtyard to outer gate again, and so beyond, marked with precision rare and notable—there is *The Festival*, in the possession of the Queen, with its ordered disorder, with its rapture of the dance—the dance's various movement, free yet controlled, serving the painter's need. We cannot pass before the greater groups of Teniers—before the pictures in which he was not pre-occupied either by the rendering of the details of the kitchen or the larder, or by the presentation of humble raiment or garden-stuff in agreeable fulness and concord of glow—without avowing that, among the painters of low life, he was somewhat alone in the dignity he cared to give to those grouped figures which made, not the main theme of his work, but the decorative charm of his background. In idea, as well as not seldom by mere hastiness of skilful execution, there is something of decorative art in the art of Teniers—a design from which nobility of movement and contour is not absolutely banished. When Teniers

was occupied with men as individuals, he was occupied with vulgar men; but when his men are the pure landscape painters' figures, placed here or there for the picture's sake, for vivacity of motion or as agreeable lines in an ordered design, the vulgarity has gone out of them, and they take their place not unworthily in the midst of that quiet country, that placid nature of undulating field and breezy sky, which Teniers loved.

The place of Teniers among the artists of the Low Countries must always be high. It was high in public estimation already in his own day, when good society of Spain and Flanders met not seldom at his chateau outside Antwerp.* He obtained in his long lifetime the full honour and reward due to his place among his fellows: he was Court painter, he was chamberlain to the governor of the Spanish Netherlands: but his place was gained and kept very specially, as we are bound to remember, by the variety of his qualities more than by the preponderating influence of any one of them. He was a master of technical processes, but that was not all. He was the rival of Ostade in the keenness of his perception of what was low, and what must needs be humorous and be welcome, in the

* The chateau at Perck, his picture of which is in the National Gallery.

peasant life ; but that was not all. He gave to certain of his figures, to certain of his groups, a dignity of line and contour found only besides (among his brethren of the Low Countries) in one artist of more brilliant spirit—in Jan Steen. He was almost alone, and even where not quite alone, he was certainly the foremost, in the felicitous alliance of the representation of the humble merry-making with the art of the landscape painter. He found a genuine and ever fresh and various interest in the changing aspects of a country world monotonous to duller eyes ; and in the effects of weather—gleam of sunshine striking across meadows, or gathering of clouds over the fully charged stream—he anticipated something of the task and the delight of the modern art of landscape.

For twenty years, beginning with the middle of the Seventeenth Century, we trace the signature to pictures of Genre of a man of whom nothing was known until lately, and only too little can be known now —Quilijn Brekelenkamp. His work—unrepresented in our National Gallery, and not seen quite at its best in the Museum of Amsterdam—is of so high an order in Dutch Art that we cannot think of him as we have been bidden to do, chiefly as the pupil of Gerard Dou, or chiefly as the follower of Ostade.

Brekelenkamp: 'La Consultation'

Perhaps he forfeited individuality—he forfeited at least the chance of promptest recognition—by the wide range of his work. In comparison with the more popular masters whose pictures have been explored by several generations, the canvasses which we attribute to his hand are few. But the few canvasses show many themes. In one Brekelenkamp follows Ostade at his best, Ostade at his most artistic, at his most refined; in another, in *A Chemist's Shop*, he recalls the preoccupation of Peter de Hooch, busier with problems of light than with problems of character; and so it is, too, with his *Boutique de Tailleur*, in the Van der Hoop Museum. Once, in a picture I saw at an auction room, he had painted rough kitchen life with what must needs have been a native refinement. And again, in the subject of which a sketch is given in this book,—*La Consultation*, from the Salle Lacaze—we have Brekelenkamp engaged with a favourite subject of Jan Steen. The quiet and gentle dignity of the group of two is worthy of record: and the people and the scene are painted with the simple directness of Brekelenkamp's art. Like most of the true painters of character, he found two or three figures enough for him. With a crowd a painter must be slightly acquainted; the selected two or three he may profoundly know. Sometimes

with Quilijn Brekelenkamp these two or three were subordinate to the effects of light and line and texture—he was then near to De Hooch or near to Teniers—but oftener, as with Steen, character was the supreme interest. He had a various and a masculine mind, and he put it into his work.

THE PETTY MASTERS.

And now we have considered, perhaps, the artists who did most to worthily uphold the art of Genre Painting in the schools of the Low Countries, and are to pass from that world of reticent manner and limited charm to the world of sunnier and ampler life which opened to the privileged classes of the Eighteenth Century in France. As we cross the border and go from Amsterdam and Haarlem to Paris and Versailles, a fine sense of human beauty and grace, happily nourished on the sights of every day, comes to be added to that keen penetrating quality of which the Dutch themselves had already so much. But so many Dutch masters of whom the dictionaries tell us—nay, whose works face us proudly in every gallery in Europe—have thus far been without a word. In a school great and influential like that of Holland, there is necessarily the company of minor artists—witnesses to the virtue of their leaders: pupils perhaps, perhaps followers, with this much of what is in them derived from another, and that much

painfully or spontaneously developed from their own nature and their own observation of life. Then, again, there are the eminent men who upheld the art of Genre Painting less worthily, as it seems to us, with our taste of to-day, than most of those of whom we have been thinking in these by-past pages, but who—whether because too fortunate in their own time or too slightly esteemed in ours—hold a rank very different now from that exalted one which their own time accorded them. This at all events is an important class: it consists of men of whom the world has at least heard: for the large public, little occupied to get the first news of changes of taste, some of these men have still names that bear authority. Gerard Dou, Frans Mieris, his pupil or associate, and William, the son of Frans, were reckoned a century since among the most imposing and marvellous of masters. The field for popular triumph was at one time almost theirs alone among the Genre painters; and if Metsu and Terburg and Jan Steen a generation ago, and De Hooch and Van der Meer and Nicholas Maes to-day, have come up to share, as it were, their triumph—even, as one hopes, to prevail over them for ever in the eyes of those who look for mind and spirit in the art of painting—still the place that was won by these men long ago, and which

they have never wholly lost, was won by qualities which it behoves us not quite to ignore.

Two points have told greatly, even in these recent years, against a cordial acceptance of the Dutch Genre School by the thoughtful man, by the tasteful woman—by the *belle âme* with whom lies after all in the last resort the faculty and right of judgment on beautiful things. The first is the dominance, not of beauty at all, but of unmitigated ugliness, in so many of the Dutch pictures—the result not alone of that special aptitude for hideousness of which certain men give evidence, but also of the world that was around these painters in their daily lives, and the unrecognised consequence of

Was uns alle bändigt—das Gemeine.

And the second point is the dull and petty mechanism of too many a long accepted master. It happens that the two faults are rarely found together. Indeed, they are almost incompatible. Dusart, Bega, and Brauwer are the masters of the repulsive: Brauwer, through his brief life and stormy days, the strongest, truest, most repulsive of the three. Gerard Dou, Frans Mieris, and William Mieris are the masters of the petty. They concentrated their attention upon realising in their art the accurate prose of material things. On the small

scale of his invariable choice Gerard Dou was the most successful. His at all events was the finer and daintier imitation. What seems the meanness and narrowness of aim common to all crushed him the least. Of course he had no large entrance into the interests of life. Pupil of Rembrandt, he was never in matters of the mind Rembrandt's follower. But there are portraits by him, there are tiny figures on his curiously wrought panels—such as the tailoress at the Hague,* with face gravely pleasant—that show, now and again, not profundity indeed, but the qualities of *esprit* and attractiveness. There is something of *esprit* in his very touch. It has less of dull and laboured elaboration than the touch of the Mierises. And in this quality of *esprit*, Schalcken, his scholar, to some extent resembles him. Both of them can paint faces which it is not disagreeable to know. In Dou's portrait of himself in our National Gallery we have a picture characteristic no doubt of the man as well as of the artist. He was a very finished little gentleman, and his portrait shows him with small pale brown eyes, wide apart; the delicately moulded pleasure-loving mouth only softly closed—not firmly set. A pipe is in his long and slender tapering hand. He is thirty-three or thirty-five.

* *La Jeune Tailleuse*: one of the finest works of Gerard Dou.

And near this picture hangs the portrait of his wife, in which we see Dou's work fullest of the qualities that it is best for it to have—the extreme delicacy of manipulation justified by the daintiness of the theme. The wife, with her small prettiness, is painted *con amore*, in a green gown bordered with fur: in a white chemisette and with ornaments of pearl. She is fresh-coloured, with brown eyes and warm brown hair, the delicate lips a little parted. Yet happier, because affording more opportunity for graces of composition, is a picture portrait at Bridgewater House. It is said to be Dou himself. Here the thin and agile figure, seen full length, sits in a chamber crowded with the signs of the pursuits and pleasures of the educated class, and the dainty hands are closed lightly over the fine lines of a violin. Let us hope that works like these, with something of the interest of humanity and something of the interest of legitimate art, were in part the occasion of his fame. His *Poulterer's Shop*, with the skinned rabbit, duck and hare and cock—with its horrible red truth to hideous objects—may well be the surprise of the vulgar. And here and everywhere the minuteness of scale is the delight of the curious.

Schalcken was the painter of candle-light as it fell upon pretty little things—accessories of the

toilette, the furniture of the dressing table—and the National Gallery has all we need require in the study of his work. Like Dou, he was a painter for the upper classes of art patrons. These would chiefly care for the themes he chose and for his way of treating them: for *Lesbia Weighing Jewels against her Sparrow*, the refined illustration to Catullus and the best of Schalcken's works in England if by triumph of dainty imitation we must rank him. These would care for *The Singing Lesson*, with its luxurious interior; for the evening scene in the warmly-lighted bedroom, where a soldier presses jewellery on a lady nothing loath. Schalcken's art ministered to pleasure. He was wholly secular and wholly luxurious. He was the painter of the trivial and the painter of the superfluous—a typical "petit-maître."

WATTEAU.

1684-1721.

In Watteau's day some of the people who meant to be sincerely his friends scarcely began to know what were really the greatest virtues in the art he practised with such feverish ardour. De Caylus, in careful lines written for the Academy to listen to, made sapient reflections on things lacking to his work. And Watteau himself had what it is pleasant to think of as the modesty of genius; at least he had none of the visible self-confidence of successful talent. He was not—he had not been able to become —that which he wanted to be. He died still young, but after a restless life which he had mistaken for failure. His personal qualities, bright, tender, and loveable, ensured him certain friends, but he found them less in his equals than in one or two curious and kindly collectors of his art, and in a country clergyman, remembered now for Watteau's love of him. The merely fashionable buyers of the day purchased his pictures and thought them just as light, as pretty,

as superficial as they wished them to be. Watteau remained dissatisfied, and the circumstances of his life counted for something in the discontent, for he was profound in a trifling generation, and was eminent for intellect in an age eminent for the triumph of the senses. But his temperament counted for more. He was physically weak—his nervous system too finely developed for the success that pays no penalty. A man's temperament, active and brilliant as Watteau's, includes the qualities of womanhood. He was like a book closed to the duller apprehension. Among common minds, this mind of Watteau, so quick to see and to feel, found itself homeless and lonely.

The child of a tiler of Valenciennes, Watteau was born (in the autumn of 1684) into the smaller bourgeoisie. The story of his earliest years is only the habitual one among artists—first of parental opposition to his career, then of aid grudgingly given for the inefficient training to be had of the provincial master. It matters very little to us now whether the father of Antoine Watteau, at one time anxious for his son to be a tiler like himself, did or did not continue long in attitude of opposition, for the result in either case is before us, and could hardly anyhow have been other than it was. For Watteau's life, and especially his early life, the materials are small:

there are four pages prefixed to a reproduction of certain of his works issued after his death: there are the anecdotes which the compiler of a last century catalogue—the catalogue of Lorangère—gathered together to add interest to the scattering of a collection, and there is the memoir which the Count de Caylus read to the Academy at its sitting of the third of February, 1748. As to the difficulties of the painter's days at Valenciennes these various records differ; but what is known is that while still almost a youth Watteau came to Paris—the narrow fortunes finally abandoned for more adventurous career, that might include, as far as outward things were concerned, complete triumph or complete failure, as Watteau himself had learned to understand long before he uttered the phrase that has become a proverb of despair—"Le pis-aller, n'est ce pas l'hopital?"

One of the stories says that he was drawn from Valenciennes by a painter who worked for the Opera. Another, that his first Parisian master was Metayer—"peintre médiocre"—and that he left him very soon. The Pont Notre Dame became a resource by which he eked out a living: it was there that the small traders of the day had established a market for copies: the copies of copies, the originals of which

were themselves remote from the works that they professed to actually be. It was from business of this kind—from copying sacred works, and I suppose inventing them—that Watteau passed on to be a pupil and a helper of Gillot, and afterwards, whether from Gillot's jealousy or Gillot's good will, passed again from the studio of the early painter of the operatic festival to the studio of Claude Audran, the concierge of the Luxembourg, a decorative painter, a designer of ornaments. In the Palace of the Luxembourg Watteau was lodged with his master. There were before him the pictures of Rubens, which fired him with the desire of movement and life in his art: so much did he remember them that in the period of his maturity he introduced into the group of *The Surprise** two figures violent of action that are Rubens' wholly except in the costume. And there, too, in the gardens of the Luxembourg, were the scenes that became later the elements of his selected landscape—not a landscape of the opera, with trees of the *coulisse*, the boarded foliage of the wings of a theatre, as has been often declared, but a landscape of ordered beauty and carefully planned pleasantness; the scene not indeed of rustic occupation and of the growth of field crops, but such a stately garden land-

* Buckingham Palace.

scape as might alone be allowed to surround the Medicean palace.

The presence of Rubens, the presence of the Luxembourg, the presence even of such design of Audran as drew its motives from the Renaissance, and taught that sense of rhythm and harmony of line, for line's own sake, which the art of the arabesque teaches best, counted for much in the making of Watteau. And from Gillot he had his example in the themes of the *fête galante*. But these things alone, acting upon a nature of not much more than ordinary intelligence and sensitiveness, though they might, with years of waiting, have produced an artist of secular mind enamoured of the ardours of physical life, and of large, noble, and gracious forms, would never have produced Watteau as his work reveals him to us. It is interesting to take note of them as influences on his career—as some of the chance circumstances which bend, this way or that, even the impulses of genius. But Watteau speedily brought into his work his peculiar and personal qualities—a profundity of vision into human character; an observation so accurate and so novel that it detected differences in kindred types the variety of which had escaped the efforts of a rougher analysis; and a vivacity and certainty of hand which indeed never failed him, but

which in all his work served him most exquisitely in the quite perfect record of those French graces of motion and stillness which express not merely physical beauty but the mind's sprightliness, quickness, and courtesy.

Watteau began his independent work by a conscious and planned departure from the ways of all his masters, but he did not at first discover his own. He painted the soldiery: only once, indeed (and wisely only once), in those moments of battle with which he was never familiar, but oftener on the halt, as the troops pass through the village, or the departure for the war, or the amusements of the camp. Perhaps he never quite abandoned that order of theme, but it soon became secondary. "Le sieur Cochin," says Lorangère, has engraved two of the earliest. Watteau went away to Valenciennes at the end of his period of pupilage and service, and from thence sent the second of them to the "sieur Sirois," the patron who had admired the first and commissioned another. The journey to Valenciennes, undertaken then, when Watteau must needs still be poor, may possibly have been prompted by that wish to see his parents and his early companions which the artist avowed as the reason of it; but it may also be that he was wanting an excuse to break completely with those associations

in Paris which had taught him something, but from which he had now gained all that they could give; or it may well be that the desire to go—the very home-sickness, if such it was—came of the restlessness, the changefulness of mind and mood, which from the first was in the temperament of Watteau. At any rate we find him, without any long sojourn, in Paris again, and his reverence for such great old masters as he knew, whether of Venice in the Sixteenth Century, or of Flanders in the Seventeenth, urged him to obtain if possible the knowledge of others, and made him a candidate for the prize of Rome. In 1709 the second prize fell to his lot, but it did not bear with it the grant for the wished-for journey. More and more an admirer of Venetian art—its composition and its colour—Watteau still counted upon the prize of Rome as a means of seeing Venice. But there were those who soon held of him that he did not require the opportunity; and when, three years after the first effort—that is, in 1712—he showed to members of the Academy certain works that he hoped might get him the boon, one of the influential, it is related, taking him aside, said that he knew more of his art than many Academicians, and that the time had come not for the prize he was waiting for, but for reception into the Aca-

demy itself. M. de la Fosse, a forgotten celebrity, an ignored artist, but a generous and influential furtherer of the art of others, urged him to undertake the formal visits of request for admission, and all should be made smooth for him. So, unexpectedly, did Watteau achieve a position, and the painter who was to give a new life and value to the often trivial theme of the *fête galante*—the painter who in his early manhood had now been singled out less for the work by which he would be eventually remembered than for the work in which he had attempted to be the Wouvermanns of France—found himself far on the road to be fashionable: his pictures talked about, his rooms crowded, his time engaged by the attentions of the demi-connoisseur.

This was the period at which it was very fitting that De Caylus should make his acquaintance, and begin to undervalue his pictures, thinking all the while that he was praising them. "Watteau," said De Caylus, years afterwards, in his paper for the Academy, "voyait l'art beaucoup au-dessus de ce qu'il le pratiquait." He seemed then to "practise it" very humbly. For De Caylus, the art of Watteau was "piquant," and scarcely more. Yet De Caylus expressed in sober words to the Academy the judgment of the day. Perhaps the humble painter him-

self hardly knew that he was profound. His critic told him he was "as mannered as he could be," and one day praised him for being "correct in the expression of his fabrics."

Fortunately Watteau discovered amongst the crowd two or three more appreciative persons—though De Caylus, we may be sure, intended to be good-natured, and was now and then helpful. There was De Crozat, the great and cultivated amateur for whom he sometimes painted; at whose house he stayed long and with a welcome, and who gave him free access to a rich and useful gallery. There was M. de Julienne, the friendly patron whom Watteau represented with himself—the painter holding a palette; the patron, who was so much a friend, playing the violoncello by his side. De Julienne seems to have counted no hours so well spent as those which were spent in Watteau's society, and no pictures so well bought as those which came from Watteau's brush. For him Watteau's art was "l'art divin." Indeed he is reputed to have been at one time the owner of nearly the whole of Watteau's works. When distance divided the two friends they took to letter writing. Books passed between them. "Reading," admits De Caylus, "was Watteau's greatest delight." He

had also, it seems—and that must have pleased M. de Julienne—"la délicatesse de juger de la musique et de tous les ouvrages d'esprit." For several years the two men were associated intimately, and after Watteau's death it was De Julienne who was pre-eminently the furtherer of his fame: it was he who undertook the business of arranging at great cost with the skilled engravers of the day, that they should apply themselves diligently to translate into black and white the pictures of the master. The task was splendidly achieved, and, on De Julienne's part at least, love for the work was at the bottom of the energy, though "in giving these things in their perfection"—wrote he very modestly and adroitly as the last lines of the prospectus of them—"M. de Julienne has had as much in view the satisfaction of collectors as the reputation of Watteau, who was his friend." There is no pleasanter story of friendship to tell, even in that age in which these two men lived—an age of friendship often closely cultivated by those who held no virtue greater than the virtue of helpfulness.

Some other friends of Watteau deserved to be at least briefly noted. There was M. Sirois, an early supporter—Lorangère's father-in-law, and the buyer of some among Watteau's earliest pictures. Many

years after their first acquaintance, the painter, seeking for quietness, found refuge and retirement at M. Sirois's—the "instability" of character on which De Caylus insists at all events not having estranged Watteau from those who had very thoroughly liked him. Again, there was M. Vleughels, sometime director of the Academy at Rome, but whom our painter knew in France only, and with whom he was wont to live. Lastly, a man for whom Watteau in gratitude went so far out of his way as to paint a religious picture—l'Abbé Harenger, a clergyman of Nogent, near Vincennes. To Harenger's house, in the quiet village with its poplar-edged fields lying along the Marne, Watteau betook himself when he was experiencing in ruined health the last fatigues of Paris. Sprightly of observation, sober of life, often by reason of his temperament sad of spirit, Watteau during the fifteen years of his manhood owed much to one or other of these faithful friends, and showed that he knew it. He worked constantly during those fifteen years, but not always with persistence in one object. "He talked well," wrote M. de Julienne: "he wrote well also; and he was almost always meditating."

It is related that there was some difficulty in getting Watteau to decide on his diploma picture

to which the Academy was entitled. It came five years after his admission to the honours of the society, but when it came he had chosen no unworthy work.* Failure of health, and restlessness or the desire of travel, took him in 1719 to London, of which friends had told him; and the tradition is that he was well received. Afterwards, with health finally broken, he was again in Paris: then quitted it for Nogent, and there died, at the Abbé's house—July 18, 1721—aged only thirty-seven.

To the precise and intimate truth of various gesture, which the greater Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century had made their own, Watteau added a refined vivacity and exquisite grace to be learned from the every-day models of France, and hardly to be learned from any others. In his quickened and intense appreciation of that grace and that vivacity so happily before him, lies the key to the fine peculiarity of his art. For his appreciation of these things enabled him to record and reveal many most significant beauties of character and being too much accustomed to be overlooked and mistaken; and the veracity and range of his art of gesture mark it off as something very different from a merely mechanical accuracy in the reproduction of pantomime—

* *L'Embarquement pour Cythère.*

from a mimicry which may well owe part of its seeming success to the clear shallowness of an observation untroubled by thought or memory, and forgetting the action of the just past moment in the action of the present. If what is commonly understood as incident had a greater place in his work, if he were more engaged with the course of his story and less with the nature of his characters, his work, while more popular (since fraught with the interest of obvious and intelligible theme), would be less precious and valuable, and its novelty would be less really original. I am thankful then that he was a painter of comedy, and not a painter of melodrama, for the light and daily action of the one leaves play for the truths and graces of character far better for most of us than does the exceptional moment or the exceptional fortune of the other. And we shall not have begun to get at the truth about the art of Watteau until we have done with the well-worn fancy that he can only be superficial, because his best painting is the painting of a picnic or of an embarkation to an isle of secular happiness and lightsome loves. De Caylus himself urged somewhat regretfully that there was no violence—by which he meant no intensity—in the pictures of Watteau: "il ne s'est jamais exposé à rendre aucune passion."

"*Exposé* à rendre!" indeed. There are drawings of Watteau that might confute the statement, yet it is plain that passion was not his preference. But as to the representation of it, was he incapable or was he careless? Perhaps the truth is that one dominating passion would have been too simple a thing for him; and as in the gestures of his figures—in all the trained grace of them—he records the influence of breeding and race, so in the expression of his faces (where these are not the very young faces of promise alone) he records not a dominating impulse but the experience of a life. His greatest faces—albeit the owners of them may but rest just now in tree-shaded gardens or put out in golden pleasure barques, on summer waters—are the faces over which a various life has passed, and their painter has profoundly known it. Of that various life he has given them the inextinguishable interest, so that for the spectator of them they are no simple reflections of a mood of anger or bliss. There is no one passion, but of passions, sufferings, likings, gentle thoughts, the trace and track.

There is a way in which we are able to explain to ourselves the dissatisfaction which, as contemporary chronicle assures us, Watteau felt with his own painted work. His painted work is not in its record

of character the equal of his drawings. Other qualities and charms, the necessary and expected gains of finished work in well skilled hands, the paintings acquired; but this supreme and most enduring interest, the interest of character, some of them were without. The precision of figure drawing was hardly less keen, and the grace of gentle action was all the greater because for the full beauty of both in the work of Watteau each figure must have relation to some other. And it had that, of course, in the completed pictures—had it most perfectly in the *Embarquement pour Cythère.*

And again, his control and command of noble hues, golden and brown, and crimson and grey, are displayed completely only in his pictures; though they are certainly suggested in the drawings by his adroit employment of the reds touched with black, or blacks touched with red, that in realising gradation, indicate change, and *paint* for us, as it were, in the limited colours of his couple of crayons, the sunny complexion and the hair of ruddy gold. They can but suggest, however, what the picture can realise: not for them actually the rosy gold of the *Embarquement*, the steely greens of the *Finette*, the warm and creamy whites and full-flushed browns of *Gilles.* And the picture too, the finished compo-

sition, has a rhythm of line carried into subtle complications to which the drawing must needs remain a stranger. But for the drawing is reserved that crowning value of Watteau's work which to those who have once entered into it accounts for and ensures its continual fascination—his very keenest and yet most gracious record of the secrets of character, of the history of a life perhaps very weary, perhaps very happy, at all events very full. The pictures of Watteau are, with hardly an exception, small—that is, the figures are small—but the scale is much larger in these great drawings which fortunately remain: the "studies" as they would be called in inaccurate description: the "pensées," the thoughts for, the very motives of, the pictures, as he called them himself. And it may be that for Watteau—not troubled, probably, very much with the reflection that the Virgin of his sacred picture was a comely village girl and nothing else, and that his pictures of the soldiery were below Wouvermann's, and his rendering of a tempest only worthy of the scene painter of an opera—it may be that for Watteau the unattainable and longed-for thing was the quite adequate transfer of a character from paper to canvas, from the isolation of the drawing, with its simpler material, to the crowd of the picture,

with its different conditions and its more complicated aims. For this, whether the painter thought it or not, is at least the most important matter in which the great art of Watteau yields to the great art of Rembrandt—in which the intellectual painter of the chosen world of France lags behind the supreme painter of all the world of Holland.

Watteau had never all the world before him: the limitations of his practice were stricter than the limitations of his mind. He was thrown chiefly with the great and with those who ministered to the wants of the great: with lord and lady, actor, musician, damsel, servitor. But when he dealt with types with which these, his selected ones, had nothing in common, he was likewise quickly and clearly at home. Not very often does the theme of some bourgeois occupation strike in among the subjects of cultivated leisure and pleasure; but it does sometimes, as in *L'Occupation selon l'Age*, and in several drawings. And when it is dealt with, it is dealt with thoroughly: the spirit, if not always the letter of it, has been well observed. The place of the bourgeois, seen now for the first time in French art, is plainly admitted, as the bourgeois himself is at this time just beginning to assume importance, to see the employment of the Civil Service open to him,

to save money, to taste the comforts and recreations of a life not wholly menial or material. The place of the bourgeois, during the next half-century, is gradually to become greater, till it is not only admitted, but defined and honoured in Art, in the accurate poetry of Chardin. But Watteau already understood a little of the staid charm of the French bourgeois quietness.

"Le peuple," too—that more abounding class which existed, in the days of Watteau, in the interest not of itself but of the nobles—is pourtrayed here and there, in a stray figure, with the remembrance of the early Valenciennes days, and with the observation of the streets of Paris. Here—most happily perhaps in Miss James's collection of drawings, the unequalled assemblage of the *pensées* of the master—is a mendicant woman, half peasant and half tramp: a beggar woman, basket in hand, looking us full in the face with all the confidence (nay, all the insistance) of French mendicancy, whether now or then. Again, in the same collection, which reveals as does no other Watteau's range and skill, is the draggling and half-drunken figure of a skinny and loose-gestured youth, now at the fag end of a short life that began in debauchery and ends in drivel. The art of Watteau, which reflects

the charm of the actual, can reflect, if need be, its repulsiveness.

Of men's faces few appear to have interested the painter so much as the mobile faces behind the footlights of the theatre—behind the footlights and behind the scenes the theatre interested him, and he knew profoundly its peculiar vivid life which others studied vaguely. Often enough—often, I know, by choice—he is occupied with the race of artists: *genus irritabile*, of which he was himself pre-eminently one. In rare works among his rare portraits they are avowedly recorded. There is the engraved drawing, for instance, of the sturdy yet kindly intelligent face of J. B. Rebel, "compositeur de la chambre du roi;" and at Valenciennes there is a painted portrait of Antoine Pater, the sculptor, father of Watteau's pupil. Mariette assures us that the countenance of Vleughels, the painter, appears as one of the faces etched by Cars in the *Recueil des Figures de Differents Caractères*; and from the writing on the margin of a drawing at the Louvre we learn that that sheet makes us acquainted with the features of the flutist Antoine, the Italian singer Paccini, and a Frenchwoman who appeared like these at Crozat's concerts—D'Argenton. This and that fascinating damsel of the theatre is here

and there, and there again. But as far as I have been able to see or to discover, no face appears so often and so readily as the face of the comedian Poisson. Pourtrayed avowedly in those little *Figures Françoises et Comiques*, which are engraved with so light and sketchy a touch, he appears over and over as a most chosen model, the square broad face of quick expression set on the square shoulders and the great but comely frame. He is in the background of the *Fêtes Venitiennes*, engraved by Laurent Cars. I think we trace his profile as the father in *La Famille*, and certainly his is the figure falling back in the *Assemblée Galante*, with hand and arm upraised; and again he is the man talking to the girl at the right of the engraving from *L'Ile Enchantée*.

And as Watteau repeated a favourite head, he repeated a favourite gesture, or a figure that pleased him. We may see that the figure of the girl putting the rose in her bosom, in *Les Champs Elysées*, is in every accident as well as in every essential precisely repeated in one of the three figures that form the composition of *Les Deux Cousines*. And the whole group of three which make up the dainty little subject of *Le Toucher*—the blindfold youth with hands and arms extended in search, and the peasant

girl and man who stand together, and whom he is darkly making for, as best he can—is found again, distinct enough by itself, in the midst of the more intricate and many-figured subject of *Le Colin Maillard.*

On the whole the highest strength and keenest accuracy of Watteau is not seen in his pictures of men. Some element of truth is in the assertion of De Caylus, when, having found harsh fault with his drawings of the male figure, he adds, "Les corps des femmes, *exigeant moins d'articulation,* lui étaient un peu plus faciles." But De Caylus ranked too low the work of Watteau both with the one and the other. For him, as far as pure draughtsmanship was concerned, the men were bad: the women only not *so* bad. First, of the men. Designs of the male nude figure are found but very seldom in the drawings of Watteau. An artist so careful for perfection would have been less imperfect here—less open, that is, to the objections of pedantry—if the outline of the nude male figure had been a thing with which he was seriously concerned. But though he draws the face of a man with intense interest, the male figure, in every accurate detail of its modelling, is of less account to him. He deals in his pictures with the draped figure generally: often even that is

hardly more than a foil for the display of the grace and vivacity of women, and his study of it has been sufficient, if it has not been exhaustive. Then, of the women—we speak now of Academical studies only: studies much independent of the charm of gesture and countenance. Miss James owns drawings that prove by modelling of torso, arm, and thigh, on what a solid foundation of knowledge and mastery rests the success of Watteau with those costumed figures that people so vivaciously his pictures of park and garden. The Louvre owns one design of which alike the motive and the execution would do honour to any master—a woman's deep and ample figure seen from the side, the extended arm and delicately modelled hand raised and curved over the head: a thing splendid in roundness and fulness of contour: perfectly harmonious in line and gesture.* The truth is, the nude of Watteau never suggests the workmanship of the student of anatomy. It suggests the healthy moving figure: its substance for touch and its hue for the joy of the eye. It realises life.

Boucher in his youth engraved after the master, and we find, not only in his *Pomona*, proof how his

* See the illustration. At Sir Richard Wallace's there is a picture of the nude, in which Watteau recalls, but does not reproduce, this design.

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own lax line translated ill the decisiveness of Watteau —how he suffered the individual to pass away, and needs must feebly prettify the type that remained. But in some of Watteau's own designs for the nude —in that study, for instance, for *Le Printemps*, the picture "chez M. Crozat" in which for once the Season was represented by him symbolically—as a naked figure seated, with promise of treasure scattered in spring time over earth—the touch is wanting in precision: it is not clearly begun nor promptly arrested: it wanders only in the vagueness of a large and sketchy outline: an *ébauche* at beginning: an *ébauche* still at the end. But even then the design lives and moves—has that quality at least in common with designs of happier motive and of execution more splendidly precise. The coldness of the purely academical is never suggested. For ill as well as for good it is so much away from the art of Watteau that the nude figures of his statuary—the statuary in his gardens—are not the unyielding surfaces of sculptured marble. They are living things: entirely modest, but entirely women.*

* See notably the statue in his *Champs Elysées*. It happens to be precisely the female figure from his painting of *Jupiter et Antiope* of the Salle Lacaze, of the Louvre. See also *Récréation Italienne*.

Master, then, of the essential characteristics of the nude figure; master, as we have seen already, of the grace and expressiveness of gesture, Watteau has risen here and there to such heights in the pourtrayal of refined womanhood and ingenuous childhood as have been surpassed by no earlier and no later rival. We are among Miss James's treasures. There is a drawing of a simple chubby bourgeois child, who, with hands solemnly folded, looks at us with almost an old woman's placidity: the placidity rather that is of childhood and of age alone. There is another, of a child knitting, with absolute business and absorption, with not a thought but of the all-importance of her work—a thing to note indeed for eminent delicacy of conception and handling.* Even better perhaps—at least more of a picture—is the drawing that brings before us two girls looking and leaning: leaning out over the ledge of playhouse box, it may be to look at comedy, at Pantaloon, at passing show of some kind, but with what different minds, and the mind of each how absolutely realised! In each case it is expression caught in the act: at

* One of these children is used as a secondary figure in Sir Richard Wallace's *Leçon de Musique*. Surugue has an exquisite little print after this picture.

the time when it is fullest and most revealing: only in the one face the time is a moment, and in the other much longer, for the one face chuckles gleefully, brightens to pleasure with an instant's sally, while the other face is absorbed, and has been, and will be, with grave intensity of interest. No painter of childhood, of early girlhood—not even the greatest of our English who have excelled in this—has ever sketched the phases of girl-life with a touch quite so precise, guided by an imagination quite so penetrating. For any equal of it, in sudden and vivid truth, we must go back very far—to the naïve impulsiveness of Florentine sculpture.

Then, again, there is Miss James's drawing of a thin-cheeked girl of refined and admirable beauty: one of the highest types in Watteau's noblest society. A broad curved hat, with trailing feather, sits lightly on the oval and dainty head, and the head rises like a bell-flower from throat and shoulders, having in almost ideal fulness the virtue of exquisite carriage. The eyes, far apart, look out with an expression of entirely calm perception and clear intelligence: an expression only graciously indifferent to the proffered admiration. It is the face of one who has known culture, but has never known hurry; and

having no work to be weary of, is now and again, in her sweetness and refinement, a little weary of pleasure. Her beauty has brought her the experience of men: her understanding has allowed her to profit by it.

For some of us, this profound entrance which Watteau has, and gives, into human life where it is rich and full, yet not delivered, even so much as is the commonest and poorest, from undefined longing and regretful meditation, bestows a value on his nobler drawings which the pictures painted for the world can hardly possess. But the *Embarquement pour Cythère*—whether that of the Louvre or that slightly differing version of the German picture gallery which the engraving has made familiar—remains supreme, no doubt, in its union of qualities material and mental: graces of the painter and gifts of the draughtsman: endowments of a spirit now gladsome and now sad, but never deadened and dull. Into a melting canvas of rosy gold and green, there are concentrated, on the fields which slope to the tranquil waters, so many of the best figures of the work of Watteau, in their gestures the most expressive and the most vivacious. That dream of unvext happiness and untroubled life is at least the abstract of

his most accepted art—of the pleasant art by which men have been wont to rank him. Many others of his pictures prolong that vision. But some of his finer drawings are charged with the sadness and subtlety of his more private thought. And here and there they may arrest the too confident dream.

LANCRET AND PATER.

If it is true that the two great poets of France in the Eighteenth Century were her painters Watteau and Fragonard, it is true certainly that among her minor poets were her painters Lancret and Pater. Both of them owed very much to Watteau, and more to the age that made the work of Watteau possible. Yet neither was without some share of originality, Lancret's being generally accounted the larger. But, all together, they formed a group, small, compact, influential—Watteau and his school—devoted to the record, in their changed ways, of the lightness of the Eighteenth Century—of all the sense of pleasure in human life, fair weather, and ordered landscape, which had been expressed with a profundity almost oppressive, with some afterthought of its transiency, by the school of Giorgione, two centuries before. The school of Watteau—if not Watteau himself—was troubled by no afterthought. Its pictures whisper no significant hint of the brevity of the joy they record. For that school accepted once

and for all and very frankly, this present world—the bright side of it always: the side that civilisation had made possible to refined and cultivated leisure: the pleasure of music, of the comedian, of the dance, of the adornment of dress, of a sure succession of exquisite gestures, of dainty refreshments relished slowly with chosen company under pleasant skies.

Its keen perception of all these things, and its facile understanding of a life that began and ended in them, fitted its art to be the dominant art of its own time, when Art could already no longer be dominant by such appeal to the general sympathies as the treatment of sacred themes had once allowed, but only by appeal to the particular sympathies of the privileged class. And so the painters of the school of Watteau, recording not merely the life, but the aim in life, of those for whom they worked, became accepted painters, painters in vogue. The spirit of the privileged class of their own time they interpreted. And if Watteau himself here and there went further and deeper, he was none the more popular for that; only he was perhaps the more enduring.

Lancret was an indefatigable worker, and his undoubted works are still sufficiently common. Even the ludicrously inadequate representation of

the French School in our National Gallery has not left us quite without them; and in the better museum of French Art in England—that of Sir Richard Wallace—they occur abundantly. They abound at Berlin, at Sans Souci, Potsdam, and Charlottenburg, and are to be traced at Dresden and at Stockholm. Lancret left behind him important drawings; and, popular in his own day—in his own day the accepted rival or successor of Watteau—his works, like Watteau's own and Pater's, gave occupation to the talent of the cleverest engravers of the time. As he exposed at the Place Dauphine a little in his earlier years, and later at the exhibitions of the Louvre, Tardieu, Laurent Cars, Larmessin, Le Bas, or it may be B. Audran or Scotin, were employed by Chéreau (or other such enterprising merchant) at the sign of the "Deux piliers d'or," to issue reproductions of his pictures translated into the black and white, at once careful and spirited, of that day. A very few francs made the happy bourgeois or the elegant bachelor the possessor of them, and they have brought down to our own time the almost faultless record of much that has been lost and much that is scattered. Thanks to these men all the subjects of Lancret lie out for our inspection in one given place in a given afternoon; and the artist,

like his fellows, was fortunate in being the contemporary of engravers who could render, if hardly the charm of his "tempérament de peintre"—his frequent gift of colour—at least all the charm of his gift of tone and of the completed expressiveness of his work and of the seemingly unsought-for grace and ease of gesture which were not his alone but of his master and his school.

Pictures in the Louvre suffice to show Lancret that "poëte d'un souffle plus large" than Pater which the most informed are in the habit of granting him to be, and one at least of the pictures in the Lacaze collection there, *Le Gascon Puni* (which Larmessin engraved), shows him to have not been wanting at need in that significant finish whose delicacy was never pettiness: that kind and degree of finish with which those engravers who themselves had it were wont to credit him—were wont to bring out in their translations of his work—but which he displayed more rarely than his rival and contemporary. But, whatever qualities may have been peculiar to him, and may be seen as such by the anxious searcher among his work, generally the differences that distinguish him, whether from Pater, his immediate contemporary, or from Watteau, in some sense his master, are but such as are to be

perceived in the various members of one family notoriously alike. The differences are subtle. It was a compact school. The master, Watteau, dominates the school, and has thus far absorbed in England such interest as among us has been bestowed on it. A German poet has said that there are many echoes but few voices. Watteau was a voice. Yet Lancret was not wholly an echo.

Both of them in the main professedly painters of *sujets galants*, they both stopped short of the point at which gallantry waxed indecorous. Their gallantries were but an excuse for the graceful and perpetual presentation of the happy and vivacious figures that they were able to place in elegant interiors or in those garden landscapes of orderly disorder which French taste had made common in the environs of Paris, and which Lancret as well as Watteau assiduously studied. The world of their habitual practice was the same; and if Watteau painted no event more moving than the arrival or departure of the Italian comedians, Lancret's most considerable portraits are those of the great dancers of the day, Mdlle. Camargo, Mdlle Sallé, and Mdlle. Silvia. His was the endeavour to catch the characteristics of each, as each appeared in the dance—Sallé, the accomplished mistress of graceful and

poetic pantomime, and Camargo, who sprang only to lively airs. Voltaire has celebrated them both in a couple of lines written to Camargo:

> Les nymphes sautent comme vous,
> Et les Graces dansent comme elle.

But when Lancret passed beyond his habitual world, of the amusements of the dance, of light refreshments, gentle labour, elegant intrigue, and love without violence or emotion, he inclined here and there a little to such nudities as the laxer pencil of Boucher was then, after Watteau's departure, finding fittest for decoration—though with Lancret they had a distinction which in Boucher they were without—and he inclined not at all to that intimate study of homely and bourgeois life which Watteau, when he had the chance, pursued with heartiness of interest. The drawings of an artist, more even than his engraved work, show the subjects his mind by preference turns to, and I know no drawings of Lancret which evince in him any considerable share of that love of very various and very strongly marked character which was certainly Watteau's. In one drawing of a girl swinging, at the British Museum—not to speak of those in the Louvre and other collections which it is a student's business to see—there is the very nearest approach on Lancret's part to the

peculiar grace of his leader, much as in a study of hands by Pater, at the Museum also, there is on his part the same very near approach to the perfection of quality only possessed habitually by the man who had inspired their art. But we may seek far before we find in Lancret on the one hand or Pater on the other, any such near approach to Watteau in his other virtues—the understanding of the old, and the sympathy with the subtle *naïveté* of children. Watteau's children among the drawings in the Louvre, his children among the drawings in the collection of Miss James—which all the world was able to see, and few were willing to see, at Bethnal Green—are achievements of profound and sympathetic intelligence which not Lancret only, but indeed every painter of that century was unable to rival.

Lancret, in his work, was sometimes more contentedly decorative than his master. More frequently than his master he conceived of themes which were decorative in chief—the Four Seasons of the Year, the Four Periods of the Day, the Four Elements, for example—or made them decorative by their titles and their grouping; and the treatment of these things for the corners of a *salon*, or often for the boudoir of some influential beauty, was popularised by the engravings

which M. Bocher has so perseveringly chronicled. Here and there, as in the "Season" subjects in the Louvre, he treated what are thought of as decorative themes in a style partaking of Genre. Throughout this series he is not symbolical at all: the things depicted are simply the pursuits incident to the season among a leisured gentry or happy peasantry. Here, too, in his Genre of daily life—in what that century permitted to be the realism of its elegance—he is quite away from Watteau with his Genre of the dream. And now and again, as in *Le Nid d'Oiseaux* of the Louvre, he is away from Watteau in quite another track: the impulse of the figures suggests a foretaste of the vehemence of Fragonard.

Lancret's engraved pictures, including portraits, and subjects of gentle life and moderated gallantry, and subjects of light symbolism, and subjects drawn from the fable of the accepted authors (of whom, for Lancret, La Fontaine was the chief), reach the number of eighty-seven, and they vary in size from the big plates covered with the often large touch of Larmessin, to the little ones on which is traced the delicate work of Marie Hortemals. Among the prettiest, the pleasantest, both as to subject and manipulation, is that set of the *Four Seasons* which is engraved not by Larmessin (good though

that also is) but by four different engravers—B. Audran, G. Scotin, N. Tardieu, and Ph. le Bas. That series represents, with every gentleness of contrast, such groups of coquettishly or quietly occupied people—people refined of bearing and refined of life—as interested most the pencil of this intelligent and gracious master. In the *Spring*, the woods are covered with greenery and the fields with flowers; birds mate, and the shepherd of Arcadia (in France) is happy with his love. In the *Summer* the afternoon-sunshine glows warm on a nook of the gentle river; there is the plashing of water and the play of undulating forms, with gestures of native amenity. In the *Autumn* there is the feast of the grape: by a stone seat in the terraced garden fruits and wine are served; the bow is drawn melodiously over the strings of the violoncello, and a courtly dance of measured grace is slowly fulfilled. In the *Winter*, a small yet goodly company is settled near the hearth of a lofty chamber—purest Louis Quinze—against whose panels, carved here in low relief with details for the pleasure of the eye, or here left blank with the consummate ornamentist's knowledge of the use of spaces for its rest, there stand the clock and the stately mirror and the wall side candelabri with bickering stems—the hours passing genially with

cards and needlework and talk. To possess these prints is to enjoy at its best the talent of Lancret.

It would seem almost as if these sensitive painters of a joyous life—these Watteaus, Lancrets, Paters, in whose hands all mundane pleasures become delicate and exquisite—were destined, all, to wear themselves out too swiftly: not one of them reached old age or approached it. That faculty of theirs by possession of which they were singled forth to be the favoured recorders of the beautiful movement and selected form peculiar to their day and race—that excitable perception of the most refined of carnal loveliness—bore with it, it seems, its terrible bane of a life destined inevitably to burn with a too hurried brightness. That nervous and fragile activity which alone made possible their art, was supported by a too inadequate reserve of purely material strength. Watteau died "at the age of poets": Lancret, born six years after him, survived to be fifty-three: Pater, born six years after Lancret, died seven years before him—died, that is, at the age of forty.

The story of Pater's life is one of almost precocious aptitudes and of consuming work. A fellow townsman of Watteau—whose family Watteau must

have known, since there existed a portrait by the master of Pater's father, a sculptor of Valenciennes—Pater was sent to Paris in earliest youth and became Watteau's pupil. The tradition perhaps is not untrue because it is also pathetic, that the irritability bred of an exhausting disease and of a yet more exhausting genius severed master from pupil, until Watteau, reproaching himself with this injustice during his life's last month, sent for Pater and diligently taught and counselled him. Never at all events were lessons more implicitly received: the identity of Pater's work, or, at least, of Pater's conception, is almost merged in that of his master and model.

And yet some delicate differences come gradually to be noticed. It is perhaps not all a fancy that Pater's record of the pretty trivialities of daily life, where life was most easy and pleasure most gracious, was undertaken by a mind wholly contented with its task, and that so there came to be, in the task's fulfilment, a dainty precision of handiwork of which Watteau—precise indeed among great painters—was nevertheless a little impatient. The power of sympathetic imagination, the fine appreciation of various types, belonged to the master and hardly to the pupil. To the pupil belonged facility and exactness in work that lay contentedly between more

limited lines. The master was occupied, in many societies, with types of thoughtful beauty and profound experience. The pupil was occupied with the pretty, and in a favoured society alone, and his desire was that "désir de plaire" which gives the name to one of his pictures and which covers the range of his art. With the prettiness of womanhood or the comeliness of adolescence that art is greatly engaged. His *Gathering of Comedians in a Park* * draws the portraits of the actors of the Italian comedy with insistance on physical charm; but in the lighter fancy of his *Baigneuse* of the same gallery † he is more completely characteristic, in the lighting and drawing of the figures with their elegant suppleness —in the eagerness of the youth who beseeches, and the happiness of the girl who is besought. Here, as not seldom in Pater's work, the figure of the foregound that gives its name to the design is not conspicuously the first: the background group is as daintily considered and is at least as interesting: that group of two is a completed picture, exquisite for action, expression, vivacity, and finish. And full of delicate expression and naive gesture of youth is the *Désir de Plaire*, so perfectly engraved by Surugue, which records the joy of an ingenuous

* Lacaze collection: No. 234. † No. 237.

damsel at the varied preparations of the dressing room and their enhancement of her comeliness. Pleasant is the pleasure that her comrades take in her.

At Buckingham Palace there are four pictures, in two of which Pater seems to have reached the limit of his power. By Waagen they were assigned to Watteau, but that industrious authority had no profound knowledge of the art of France, and the privately printed catalogue of the Palace treasures is probably right in attributing them to the pupil instead of to the master. Of the two pictures which are finer and richer than their companions, one is, after Pater's fashion, a scene of lovers in pleasant landscape: the other is of a larger group of joyous people, of whom one plays on the flute, and the scene passes again in open air, in the gracious climate and agreeable weather which the French painters of the "fêtes galantes," with rare exceptions, have been agreed to record. The master of the school himself scarcely admitted any other. In his group of the Seasons, painted for M. Crozat—to name the instance that comes uppermost—he has in no way entered into the joys of winter, but has only painted its rude horrors, and these with exaggeration—the blasted tree, the wind, the darkening

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storm, the old man crouched repiningly over the scanty fire on the field. Watteau, Lancret, and Pater held popularity on this condition—that they should paint sympathetically the sunshine and the summer, and the life that knew them.

CHARDIN.

1699-1779.

THE revived appreciation of his pictures in the country of his birth has not yet made Chardin known familiarly in England. Our National Gallery—so absurdly unrepresentative of great French art that it can dispense with the presence of a Watteau—is of course without a Chardin. Dulwich, indeed, has got one: it must be one of several versions of the *Sérinette* exhibited at the Louvre in 1751, and at Dulwich it appears under the title of *A Woman with a Barrel Organ*. Stafford House, too, possesses a couple of Chardins; one of them a portrait of the painter, and the other a portrait of the Encyclopædist D'Alembert. But generally Chardin is not known. The very name is unfamiliar, here in England. The pictures are held to be of little account: it is not here that the prints are collected with eagerness.

And yet the art of Chardin, or even that limited part of it which the prints alone might make us know, has its own entirely distinctive character and charm.

In each of its various methods of manifestation it is finely original and quietly fascinating. The part most capable of popularity has been worthily reproduced. Chardin, indeed, was hardly so conspicuously fortunate in having his things multiplied by Laurent Cars and Lepicié, by Surugue and Le Bas, as Sir Joshua—his English contemporary—in being "immortalised," as he himself admitted, by the work of the Watsons, McArdell, and Valentine Green. But at least the art employed was in each case quite happily adapted to the qualities to be rendered. One cannot, in Chardin's case, say perfectly, for Etching would doubtless succeed in giving to the reproduction an amount of "colour" which no line engraving could hope to give; and it might give also a subtlety in light and shade combined with that definiteness in the forms of objects which is beyond the reach of the mezzotint. Some etcher who feels the qualities of Chardin keenly should set himself to render them in his own art. But on the whole the best of the existing reproductions are in a high sense satisfactory and delightful. Colour, or what the engraver calls colour, they possess in some measure, and they are more entirely successful in their more important business—the rendering of that subdued and genuine sentiment for which such works

of Chardin as they attempt to translate are in the main remarkable and in the main charming.

Emmanuel Bocher's book, which has recorded with minute care all the engravings after the long neglected master, tells nothing of the master's life, for exactly the reason that occasioned the reticence of the learned junior of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz—it was "not within his province" to tell anything. But the life has been told elsewhere. The Brothers de Goncourt, turning over on our behalf the dusty files of the "Mercure de France," ransacking the now rare catalogues of Eighteenth Century picture-sales, reading ignored *mémoires*, and, as the least of their labours, bringing out from the mass of Diderot's criticism such parts as are devoted to praise and comment on Chardin, have discovered and compiled much; and though their discoveries do not prove the painter of bourgeois manners to have led any other than the uneventful bourgeois life, they have made an interesting chapter in a work devoted to the adroit illumination of these Eighteenth Century names, hidden too long in darkness.

Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin was born in Paris in the last year of the Seventeenth Century, the son of a skilled maker of furniture—"fabricant des billards du roi." Entering the studio of Cazes he began by

Chardin : 'La Pourvoyeuse

painting that which had no kinship whatever with the work by which he became known. But it chanced soon that Coypel wanted his assistance, and engaged him to paint a gun. Astonished, so goes the story, at Coypel's pains in the placing and lighting of the gun, Chardin set to with a will. He was now for the first time painting from nature; the charm and interest of reality laid strong hold upon him. It was some little while ere he was well before the public, but when once an exhibitor, he was at once appreciated; a fresh painter of still-life had arisen in him; Jean Baptiste Vanloo bought a picture of a "bas-relief" in bronze which the young man had sent to the Exhibition in the Place Dauphine, and paid him for it better than had been hoped. In 1721 Chardin exhibited *The Skate*, which by common consent was declared a masterpiece in still-life painting. That and many others grouped together by the painter when M. Largillière went to see his things, imposed upon a worthy judge, who took them for the work of "some good Dutchman," and held them up to Chardin as models for his own work. The fact that they were themselves his work being presently made known, the young man was asked to present himself for election, and he was soon a member of the Academy. A

life of calm and moderate prosperity was, doubtless, in store for him. He was a man of quiet mind. He had married early. His wife died young, and he married a second time. He had a son, who followed him for a while at a distance in his art, and died before him, leaving him then childless. Social and professional engagements grew on him. He was for twenty years the hanger of pictures at the Exhibition, making of course enemies, but at least commended for the humble places chosen by him for his own works. He did not receive high prices, for his art was not of the kind sought after at Court, and rich and liberal patrons of the middle class were necessarily few.

Only with a second order of pictures, later on to be mentioned, did he succeed in reaching a popularity denied to the first, which themselves ought to have been popular. For there is nowhere a greater painter of still-life than Chardin. No one has conceived of still-life so nobly: there is no one perhaps who has given quite so well as he a reality without meanness —an arrangement without pretension or artifice. The very gathering of his groups of household things has a significance, and reveals the human interest with which his brethren were never occupied. Nothing is put into his pictures thoughtlessly, and possessed

as he was of a perception uniquely keen to note the varied individualities of matter and its artistic interest, he yet had little of mere pride in his ability to paint so well the object and the substance of his choice. The simple materials gathered by him on his kitchen-slab have their place there of right, and tell the story of modest and frugal provision—from the little red jar of rough but highly glazed pottery, to the eggs and the saucepan. Here in one picture is exactly the material for the humblest meal and the things that are required to prepare it—that and no more. Here, in another, the fruits for the dessert of the rich, and with them the silver, the gold, the china sugar-bowl of famous Dresden. The drawing of these things is right, though never elaborate: the roundness and relief astonishing for truth. Still-life has perhaps not before, and certainly has not since, been painted with such a perfect and sober veracity, with such a frequent excellence in endless variation. He has painted musical instruments, on a large scale, and with something less than his habitual triumph. But the charm of the very simple never escaped him—three tiny onions and a tumbler of water made for him a picture in which he could convey the most refined beauty of tone and of colour and of liquid light. The very quality of colour and

substance—colour and substance seen through atmosphere and never harshly defined—abounds in his work. Sometimes it is very rich and glowing and very bold, as in a picture in the Lacaze collection of peaches, melons, and a big paper-labelled bottle * and in that *Silver Goblet* † in which he has so nobly realised the splendid and elaborate interchange of reflections and reflected lights in copper-coloured pottery of the basin and silver of the cup. And each reflection is not clear and cold, but vague and warm in its shifting lustre. And sometimes, as in No. 726 in the Louvre, also, but not in the Lacaze, the work is tender and subtly refined—a cup of pink and greyish-white porcelain stands near a brown wooden jewel-box, of which the pale blue lining of soft silk catches delicately the discreet light. What infinite harmony in juxtapositions seemingly so natural, yet in truth so splendidly discovered!—with what facility the supple hand sweeps over the keyboard of colour, and wakes the fullness or sweetness of its sound! A dozen of these pictures, of which these three are typical, are now seen publicly in Paris. And though in their own day they could not make Chardin's fortune, they might have sufficed for his fame.

They were followed, however, after many patient

* No. 173. † No. 181.

years, by work which won more promptly a title to celebrity His domestic scenes—the quite different work which succeeded his still-life—were multiplied and reproduced at once by the engravers of the day. Issued very often at a couple of francs apiece, they hung by the dozen on *bourgeois* walls, reflecting the life led in the chambers they ornamented. Presently a third order succeeded to the pictures which were the originals of these prints. Chardin had now long enjoyed notice, and waxed fearful of the time when notice should be withdrawn for lack of novelty. That motive, and the success of Quentin de la Tour, now his neighbour as a resident in the galleries of the Louvre —Quentin de la Tour, who has enriched the museum of his native town, St. Quentin, so that it is worthy of a pilgrimage—led him to the execution of pastel portraits. Whatever their vivacity and truth—and they were often true and vivacious—they were beneath the brilliancy of La Tour. Chardin's day was past. Enemies multiplied. Critics became indifferent. And the old man, long a martyr to the disease which caused a worthy Englishman to declare that the keenest pleasure in life was the cessation of pain, lingered useless and sad. In the last days, dropsy followed upon stone. On December 6, 1779, a friend wrote of the veteran of eighty that he was so feeble

that he had taken the last sacrament. "Monsieur Chardin a reçu le bon Dieu." He died before the close of the day, and was buried at St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

Interest centres still for most men in the second phase of his art. Chardin, for most men, is the painter of *Le Bénédicité*, of *La Mère Laborieuse*, of *L'Econome*, of *La Gouvernante*. He is the painter, that is, of decent middle-class life, in its struggle with narrow means, and in its happiness, which is that of the family and of tranquil and ordered work. Allied to certain of the Dutchmen, though hardly indeed to be confused with them, he resembles them in his faithful pourtrayal of the things that he saw, whether these be only the heaped-up contents of the fish-stall, and the fruits massed for dessert, and glasses from the cupboard, and a goblet, chased richly, or whether they be mother and the children saying grace before the meal in a narrow room, curiously ordered (*Le Bénédicité*), and child and mother grave over the embroidery of canvas-work (*La Mère Laborieuse*), and the housewife reckoning with contented gravity her morning's outlay in marketing (*L'Econome*), and the white-capped care-taker, gentle and young, bending forward with pleasant but impressive warning to the boy who is her charge (*La*

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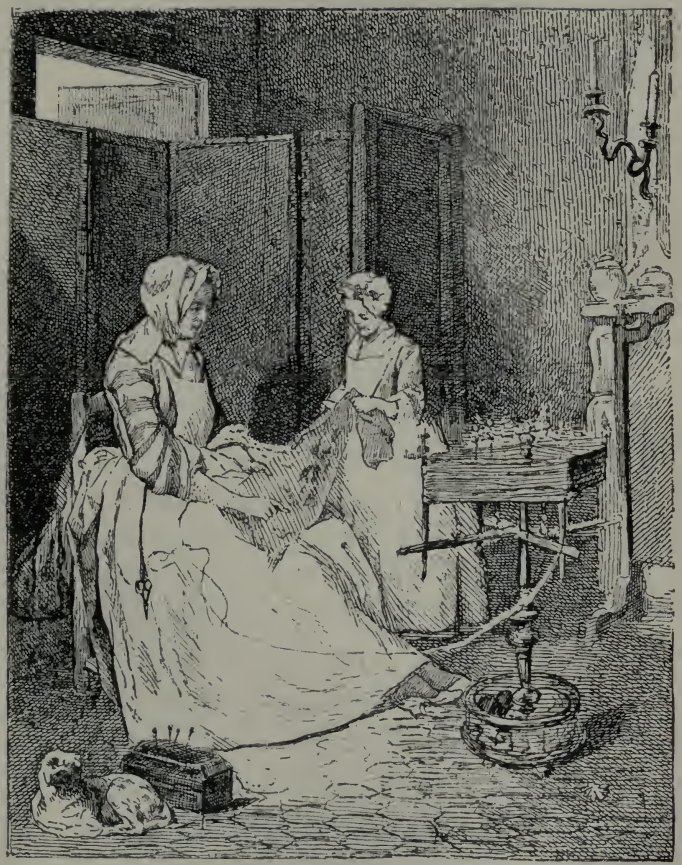

Chardin : 'La Mère Laborieuse'

Gouvernante). But in the painting of what a man sees, there is, of course, choice always, and Chardin's choice was other than the Dutchmen's—other, at least, than that of Teniers, Brauwer, Ostade, Dusart: those to whom for certain qualities he has distantly been likened. His choice was guided by a sentiment sincere and healthy. So that between his work and theirs there comes to be a great wide difference—the gulf that separates vulgarity from simplicity, lowness from homeliness—besides that other difference which needs must be when their work is concerned with the round-faced phlegmatic type that lives its slow life among the grey canals of Holland, and his with the type of happy vivacity and quiet alertness and virginal or motherly grace which is that of the true middle-class of France, and the existence of which has saved that land in its difficult hours.

This difference there must always be, even if we take the work of Chardin and set it, as indeed we have a right to do, against that of another order of Dutchmen, the men whose sentiment is nearer it —Nicholas Maes, and Van der Meer of Delft, who, like Chardin, took representative moments of common occupations, and in recording them recorded a life. The finer spirit will still be Chardin's, and in looking over the suite of his engravings, or passing in

review even the titles only of his pictures, we have proof that these figures which he painted he painted more with a single mind to the lives which the faithful pourtrayal of the habitual occupation was destined to reveal. No doubt the greater Dutchmen thought of the life much, but in their unrivalled triumph of lights and shades, and tints and textures, they thought of it—even the best of them—less than did Chardin.

And it is very noteworthy that Chardin, when he passed from the still-life which first engaged him, to the painting of these domestic scenes, became, so to say, a second and quite another artist. Of the painter of still-life, the artist unaccustomed to the contour of the living figure or texture of the living face, there lingered hardly a sign, save in the comparative subordination, the occasional effacement, of the flesh —a technical defect or technical deficiency of which the prints after his works afford no hint, though the *Bénédicité* and other pictures show it. He accepted frankly, and generally triumphantly, the new vocation: the marble of the mantelpiece, the red tiles of the floor, the shining metals of the parlour clock-case, were thenceforth chiefly accessories. With significant design, pleasant sobriety of tone, true observation, happy sentiment, he concentrated him-

self upon those scenes of the humble interior—that life contentedly restrained—whose quietness and diligence and homely grace and charm no one has more finely felt or finely rendered. And from the one order of work we have hardly a cause to suspect him to be the creator of the other. In each he was excellent, and in each he was alone. He was so possessed with the pure beauty of matter that in his art it takes new dignity. He saw so well and he believed so deeply in the virtues of his race and class that, more effectively and truly than any writer of his time, he grew to be their historian and their poet.

FRAGONARD.

1732—1806.

The hours known to most of us, if we will but avow them, when even for the appreciation of beautiful things an effort of intellect is an annoyance we resent, when we feel we should be overpowered by the great, and are ready only for the graceful and the pleasant, for the art which does not teach and does not aspire—these hours alone, intervals of indolence perhaps painfully purchased, are the hours for the art of Fragonard. Effort appears to be absent from the long and varied performances of Fragonard's spontaneous industry. The fire in his work comes only from the ardours of his temperament. He is roused to energy or passion only by the urgent demand of personal enjoyment. His southern nature suffers him to provide luxury and to provide pleasure. The possessors of old wealth, and those upon whom old wealth is newly lavished—the noble of the court of Louis Quinze and the dancer of the

ballet—understand the art that Fragonard can give them, and little besides. So it is that he is greatly caressed until he is wholly neglected. With the stress of times that succeed in earnestness and reach towards the heroic, what sympathy has Fragonard, and what chance? The wind of the Revolution sweeps through his boudoirs—finds in his *cabinets de garçon* a superfluity of naughtiness. His occupation is gone, and in the last years, to the weariness of sorrow—since he has lost his daughter, Rosalie, whom he profoundly loved—there is added the weariness of professional failure. He goes back into the South, solacing himself, as best he can, with the sights and sounds of the familiar land, and in Paris an inappropriate silence settles over his name.

Inappropriate, because the art of dryness and austerity that succeeded Fragonard's was in itself as incomplete as his own. The art of David and Ingres, which recalls Rome, could never permanently put aside the art of Watteau and Fragonard, which recalls Venice. The saner appreciation of a remote time—a time at all events remote enough to be removed from the prejudices of the very moment of production—restores that dispossessed art to its proper honours: values Watteau, it may be, a little

more than he has ever been valued before, and claims for Fragonard no greatness indeed, but yet some very personal gifts of impulse and charm.

He seems to me to be distinguished from the not less popular Boucher by the sincerity which is conspicuous in his work. The painter who was at once the master and the *protégé* of Pompadour hardly believed in his own gods and goddesses. It was his error and misfortune that he tried too frequently that which he could not achieve. But the goddesses of Fragonard represent life, and Hazlitt, if he could ever have appreciated things wrought in France, would have recognised that they were well within the limits he prescribed for the ideal. "We may raise the superstructure of fancy as high as we please: the basis is custom"—the basis is the beauty we familiarly know.

It was the kind of beauty and the kind of joy he knew familiarly that inspired Fragonard and were reproduced in his art; and we find this not only in the figures which he drew from his experience of Paris or of Italy, but in the landscapes which are memories of his own sunny country of Provence, or pleasant jottings of the poplar-bordered fields in the wide valley of the Seine or the Marne. He was born at Grasse—the town of luxurious scents in a

land of luxurious fertility: a place that might have suggested those affluent lines of "Sordello":—

> A footfall there
> Suffices to upturn to the warm air
> Half-germinating spices: mere decay
> Produces richer life; and day by day
> New pollen on the lily petal grows,
> And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

Coming to Paris while a youth, he is Chardin's pupil and Boucher's, and within two years gains "the prize of Rome." There follows a period of travel, in which not only North Italy but Sicily and Naples are explored. The chief result of Roman influence is the *Callirrhoé* of the Louvre *—an elegant tragedy, gracefully conceived by one who was incapable of horrors. Afterwards he learnt what were the things in which he could hope to be sincere, and it was perhaps no calamity for his art that disputes and delays as to the payment of commissions for the State threw the young man back upon the support of a private patronage whose demands were singularly in accord with the light promptings of his genius. Hardly greater in tragedy than our own Bartolozzi, our Cipriani, our Angelica Kaufmann—whose weak elegance is the subject of contemporary delight—

* *Le grand prêtre Corésus se sacrifie pour sauver Callirrhoé.*

Fragonard, unlike these, had the happiness to abstain from failure. He addressed himself to the facile but ingenious painting of portraits, to the realisation of those visions of landscape which he owed to the years of his youth, to the painting of figures either in allegorical design under which pure reality scarcely affects to be hidden, or in scenes of common life and familiar passion of which he caught the grace and the fire.

But Fragonard, like the light poet that he was, so prone to be diverted and prone to be charmed, was greater in invention and suggestion than in positive performance: he was not the painter of a masterpiece, but of a hundred pieces of unassuming fascination: and his early deficiency in definition was prolonged and perpetuated by his accustomed undertaking of rapid and decorative work.

That deficiency in definition—that absence of precision of line—could have little result upon his pictures of landscape: it neither counts as quality nor as defect. Moreover his touch is often daintier and more precise in the finished landscape than in the design of the figure. His landscape, in its ordered disposition of foliage and of gardens of fountain and terrace, is at once a dream of the opera as well as a memory of Provence. Sometimes its unfamiliar

blues and greens suggest the colours of a night fête under the selected and artificial light which the painter himself loved, and which he arranged for in his Paris studio. It must have seemed sometimes that the common day and common atmosphere were too vulgar to play around the fairy marchionesses of his fancy group or fable. At other times the landscape represented is purely natural, but I do not know that it is always most interesting then. Fragonard, it seems, had not the heart to accentuate and exalt the familiar nature. He paints a heath or broken ground with tameness: he makes no significant study of the daily skies. *L'Orage* of the Louvre * is perhaps an exception. That he liked landscape counts for something: that he painted it is a fact to be noted, especially in England, which has always entertained too mean a notion of the limitations of his work. But that he contributed materially to the knowledge of Nature and the love of her, as some have asserted but lately in France, is by no means evident or probable. The simple picturesque was understood better, and interpreted more faithfully, more pointedly, by a painter still less known than Fragonard for landscape at all—by the Parisian master of the

* Lacaze collection: No. 202.

southern pupil—by Boucher. The occasional studies of Boucher in this field reveal a more contented dealing with pure rusticities—with the pretty accidents and combinations of form that occur in the farmyard with its well, in the village street with its clustered roofs—than was often, to my knowledge, evidenced by the work of the fervent artist of facile passion.

Where, then, is Fragonard's greatest sincerity and Fragonard's charm, apart from the ordered landscape of poplar group and terrace steps whose elegance he felt and loved? In the painting of the daily human grace around him and of the light emotions which he knew—of the subtle beauty that eludes analysis because it is neither chiefly of form nor chiefly of colour, but much in a happy alacrity in elegant movement—of the impetuous desire that knows no denial: that claims, revels, and is satisfied. His portraiture has character without force or profundity. It seems—as very notably in the reading maiden of Sir Richard Wallace's collection, and, less conspicuously, in *L'Etude* of the Louvre*—to be the bright and faithful record of a vivid impression. The girl-child's nature is seized, because its ex-

* Lacaze collection: No. 198.

pression is yet simple: very simple, ingenuous, and sweet. With the woman's, Fragonard has not, in the Louvre painting, been very greatly occupied: he saw in her figure the opportunity of large and liberal gesture; and as she stands, with the rich browns and yellows of her raiment, with the red leaves of her big book wide open across the breadth of canvas on which she is depicted, she confesses, in her rough fashion, to the ideal of her painter—the art of Venice, from Veronese down to Tiepolo. *La Musique* of the same gallery is just as much a rapid study from the life. A man plays the guitar: he is seen from behind: the head is turned, and very vivid are the features caught up in momentary and speaking expression.

The line is indistinguishable that divides portrait from the life study destined for fancy composition, and it was the happiness of Fragonard and of his school in France that their life studies could be realistic—could be utterly true—while yet supremely elegant. An openness of impulse and freedom of vivacity marked their accustomed models. And just as Fragonard could throw into his etching of *L'Armoire* the subtlety of shame-faced and crest-fallen looks, or could paint the delicate moment of *Le Contrat* with a delicacy only less subtle than that of

Lavreince or his engraver in the hesitation of *Les Offres Seduisantes*—so he could put upon canvas the impetuous demands of the rival lovers in *La Coquette fixée*: a design which is no mere *pastiche* of the Venetian, but Venetian itself in the flow of form and the liberal grace of posture. But drawings perhaps —because most absolutely from the life—are at once the first and the completest records of the French elegance and French alertness that were around Fragonard in the salon. Two studies of figures in interiors occur to me as the finest examples of his easy and immediate transfer to paper of the pleasant lives and the bright movements of his daily company. One of them is a group of two figures, the sepia drawing of *La Lecture* in the Louvre. Two heads are drawn close to each other—almost nestle side by side in the cosiness of the reading—he figures somewhat veiled in the falling drapery of a half-discarded cloak. The few dashes of the vigorous brush have conveyed the models' elegance and their contented absorption in the pleasant book. Nor for its swift study of light and shade, for its rapid arrangement of artistic effect, is this design less remarkable. The other, which is yet more interesting, since it is more abounding in the last secrets of human expression, is a red chalk drawing of a young woman

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Fragonard : From a Drawing

in society.* The head, compactly built—but with high cheek bones rising in thin cheeks, with the firm chin cut very sharply—is leant back serenely, while the eyes, of infinite expressiveness, so lively and so knowing, address, as it were, and hold in their possession, the unseen sharer in the fascinating dialogue. I suppose no artist, ever before or since, has shown so completely, and in lines so few, the nervous, active, fragile type that lives by the vivacity of its spirit alone —each turn of eye, or curve of mouth, or lift of the thin shoulder, or motion of the hand, seen as part of a character gracious yet decided—a mistress she, and swaying men wherever she may meet them, by right of mental vivacity and of features shaped in unison with the bright keenness of the pleasure-loving nature.

Fragonard, a master of the expressiveness of raiment—skilled in the dainty devices of the toilette, from the proper placing of a meaning breast-knot to the tightening of the sleeve at the elbow or the flow and fall of ribbons by the neck—Fragonard is at home with the nude. The occasional inaccuracy of the form is covered as it were and justified by that calculated vagueness which may suggest movement.

* Our illustration. From the collection of M. Edmond de Goncourt.

He avoids a precise contour—nature cannot be expressed to him by lines alone. Fragonard cares more to indicate than to realise; and his sketches of the naked figure have thus a value greater than his finished work. *Les Baigneuses* at the Louvre* is a completed thing, and in what for him is elaboration Fragonard has lost his grace and truth of movement and of being. The figures are posed a little as Boucher would have posed them. The fire of action, which is Fragonard's and the Venetians, has gone out. The limbs are lumps of red and cream colour. But there is quite another power when we turn to the hastier work in which the facile brush has wrought the theme of the moment. The *Bacchante endormie*,† though sketchy indeed, and, as it were, effaced, has the posture of truth: in the relaxed arm there is the abandonment of sleep. *La Chemise enlevée*,‡ with the lazy twist of the figure still playfully resolute to resist the Cupid ardent and overbold, is perfect for attitude and modelling. How perfect it is also, in its own sketchy and indicative way, as colourist's work, with its light painting of the flushed rose colour and creamy whites of flesh and linen, we may find by looking afterwards at

* Lacaze collection: No. 194. † *Ibid.* No. 195.
‡ *Ibid.* No. 196.

Guersant's rare print, and noting what the adroit engraver has been compelled to lose.

The world has seen in Fragonard a painter of light loves. It has forgotten how much he was a painter of unsophisticated grace, and of that other grace which, though not inborn, is, in the life of courts and fashion at a privileged time a habit so settled that it gets to be nature too. He had his true perception of child-like character and girlish simplicity. He had his vision of landscape—his thought of noble gardens set with terrace and statuary: his midsummer night's dream of blue and silver moonlight: his memory of the white sunshine of the brilliant land. Other men, leaving, like Fragonard, and leaving legitimately, the paths of pure imitation, have had higher ways than his, but his way at all events was his own. Here in landscape, as elsewhere in his work, the inventive faculty, so priceless in art, burst at least through the barriers of tradition if it left the realm of reality. Fragonard believed in his work and in what his work represented; and on the perilous ground of those light loves with which we have been wont to associate his name, his sincerity saved him. Not for him indeed to depict the devotion of a life, but he caught the enthusiasm of a moment. He conceived of love and painted it not as an elevating

sentiment, but as a healthy rejoicing over the presence of beauty. Perhaps it is unfair to him to forget that in his time and in his world that was already much. He was a man of his epoch. You take him with his failings, as you take Laurence Sterne. At his worst he remains an artist. It is much to exchange the wantonness of Baudouin for the wit of Fragonard or his happy *malice*—*Les Plaisirs réunis* for *Le Pot au Lait* and *Les Hasards Heureux de l'Escarpolette.** And it is much to have Fragonard's vehemence—even if it be shown in *Le Verrou* †—succeeding to the considered laxity of Boucher, or his impotent effort at passion.

* At Sir Richard Wallace's.

† The violent composition engraved by Blot. M. Walferdin, the veteran collector of Fragonard's works, owns a drawing for the picture.

HOGARTH, WILKIE, AND LESLIE.

WHAT Hogarth did we hardly require now-a-days to remember very carefully, because his works are household words; but it behoves us still to keep in mind what was the place he held, for the passage of time has only made his place more eminent. He was the first of English Genre painters, and though a century and a half has passed since his practice, he remains the greatest. For myself I hardly know where I may light upon another instance anywhere in which an endless fertility and ingenuity of invention has been allied with technical powers of execution so sane and so unerring—in which the gifts of the dramatist are joined so completely to those of the pure painter. There are stories by Hogarth which will live with "Tristram Shandy," and with "Tom Jones," and with "Robinson Crusoe,"—not a few of his canvasses, touched from end to end with consummate dexterity and painter's art, are as fresh to day as if they had come but yesterday from an easel at Kensington.

They at least can witness to his mastery of technical processes.

We have seen already, in looking at Dutch pictures, that Hogarth was not the first to tell stories on canvas, and to tell them from common life. In the art of the Low Countries—to go back no further—stories from common life were told by Steen, by Teniers, by Metsu, by many another. Here and there we have found they were continued, but the personages were few, the incidents simple. Jan Steen is full of witty or of coarse suggestion: by the careful introduction of telling accessories he plays the part of a mocking and explanatory chorus. But generally the scene is brief—there is no Before and After. Still oftener the Dutch painter, like the homely Genre painter of the Eighteenth Century in France, is not occupied with invention at all. He draws the family group he happened to see: the bit of love-making, or of placid worship, or of frugal provision, that met his eyes as he went by. But Hogarth painted not so much what he saw as what he might have seen. By his constant observation he accumulated stores of experiences. But his story is constructed and not found.

Of course he has to share with the greater Dutchmen—with Jan Steen especially—the credit of

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having constructed out of permanent material. They dealt with no merely fleeting folly of their day, but with the vices and the frailties that endure throughout civilised society. And so it is that there is hardly one of their pictures which is less full of meaning to us than it was to their contemporaries. From what they observed they had the art to eliminate all that was transient and casual, all that appealed merely to the public of a moment, to the public of a comic newspaper. There are other points in which the two high humourists of painting, Jan Steen and Hogarth, were alike, and in which they differ from so many of their fellows. Their fellows, from Bega to Gillray, in a desire to make life funny, have been wont to pass swiftly from nature to caricature. And they have caught a cheap success. But a more profound and accurate insight controlled the labour of these greater men. They could go far and not be further than the truth. They could give an extreme with delicacy. Again, there belonged to both of them a gift generally denied to the caricaturist—the low comedian of Art. They appreciated beauty in its most faultless form—a simple, naïve, and dainty maidenhood.

The sentiment of Hogarth, for all his vivacity, was entirely English, but his design was influenced

by the French. Practically there were no English masters whom in design he could have been willing to follow. But Watteau and Watteau's pictures of Society in its lightest hours were known a little in the England of Hogarth's day. Watteau had been in London, and after him an artist who inherited directly from the master his grace, his precision, his conspicuous ease; transferring them from the relatively ample spaces of the cabinet picture to the measured and minute inches into which the illustrator of books must needs compress his design. Hubert Gravelot lived long in England—he had a school in the Strand—and his influence was great on English art. Then there were the professed engravers, of whom the finest were sure to be French, in a generation preceding that of the rise of English mezzotint. Baron, the pupil of Tardieu, did his best work in London. Scotin followed him here. Both were personally associated with Hogarth. It has not been sufficiently remembered that the artistic world of England in Hogarth's day was very French indeed. The influence of France, in unflagging liveliness and agility, in precision with freedom, must be traced in the design and draughtsmanship of the first great English master. It deserted him in his coarser subjects, his subjects of lowest life. It was not

apparent in some of his earlier. There is none of it in the *Harlot's Progress.* It is absent from his portraits. But it may possibly be discovered in the *Beggar's Opera*, and how are we to escape the recognition of it in the *Marriage à la Mode*?

But if the design and draughtsmanship of Hogarth were due in a measure to France, his colour was his own and his sentiment the nation's to which he belonged. His personal instinct for pure art is evidenced by the hues that are conveyed to his canvas from his palette: fresh yet subdued, rosy yet harmonious. As a deceptive or imitative painter of object and fabric—of the table, of the jewel-box, of the curtain, of the velvet that covers the chair—it could never indeed be seriously contended that he is the equal of the Dutchmen; nor is his sense of the refinements of colour, of the delicate transitions and gradations of hue, as keen or as faultless as theirs. But in England at all events, even in these matters, he has but few equals. His sense of colour is much finer, his control more ample, than that of the humourist who followed him—David Wilkie. His sense of a sober harmony is greater than that of Leslie—the latest English Genre painter who has entered into history.

We said that his sentiment was entirely English:

let it be added that at least the worst of it—his inclination to grossness—was English of his time. Quite as harmful suggestions as any that disfigure Hogarth's work and banish so much of it from the drawing-rooms of our day, are to be found in the work of Hogarth's French contemporaries, but presented there with a sincerity less brutal, an insistance less revolting. It would seem as if whole generations of culture, instead of the mere barrier of race, stood between the civilisation of George the Second and the civilisation of Louis Quinze. But if Hogarth's coarseness must be claimed as English—claimed as akin to that of Smollett and Swift, who knew no reticence at all—so, too, unless our national pride may perchance be found in error, must Hogarth's sense of the sternness and stress of duty, his conviction of the necessity of honesty and of work. His art was perhaps all the more readily accepted because it taught—and not alone in *The Industrious Apprentice*—that honesty may count even in this world upon a very snug reward.

The prints of Hogarth have been more popular than his pictures, though their pure art merits are generally less great, since Hogarth's triumph with the technical parts of painting was certainly more signal than his skill as an engraver. As an

engraver, dealing with the technicalities of the craft, it is idle to compare him with the craft's consummate masters. Thus it is that the most brilliant and finished of all the engravings that record his genius were the work of other hands. The expressive plates of *Marriage à la Mode* were wrought by Scotin, Baron, and Ravenet; and later in the century the subjects were repeated in the mezzotint of Earlom. The delicate sharpness of line which was at the command of the first engravers, the control of tone and suggestion of texture in black and white which belonged to the mezzotinter, were alike beyond the skill of Hogarth. But Hogarth in his engravings was able to fulfil what has been somewhat too indulgently put forth as the restricted task of the artist in etching. He could express his purely mental conceptions: he could tell the story that dwelt upon his mind. And in one piece at least, in which no mission of morality or satire prompted his burin—the *Strolling Actresses*, of which Walpole rightly said that "for wit and imagination without any other end" it was the best of Hogarth's works—the artist, in a touch both spirited and patient, presses hard on the success of the craftsman.

Probably it would have been well for David

Wilkie if in spirit he had remained, as Hogarth did to the end of his days, within these British Isles. He travelled to enlarge his culture and to lose something of his individuality. But fortunately for his ultimate fame he had done much before he changed so considerably the subject and manner of his labour. He was forty, and he had painted *The Rent Day*, the *Blind Man's Buff*, and *The Village Festival* before he went abroad and turned to history and to portraiture. Born in Fifeshire in 1785, he was popular in London by 1810, and when the change came in his work it was he only who had demanded it.

In the importance assigned to him to humour in his earlier pictures, Wilkie followed Hogarth; but his humour was gentler. His satire was mild and very tolerant. Like the great Dutch masters of Genre, he saw that the frailties he satirised were a part of humanity, and he was never fierce, and often sympathetic. They beheld drunkenness with as complete a tolerance as he did, but the drunkenness they represented was more debasing than his. They painted evil natures brutalised by bad liquor. In Wilkie's *Village Festival* the men are very drunk, but you cannot be angry with them, for the good fellows have had wholesome drink and are as genial in their cups as Rip Van Winkle. In his painting

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of the northern vice, his nationality influenced Wilkie.

But if Wilkie entered sympathetically into frailty, he entered with the heartiest and purest zest into innocent fun. He had his Scotch naïveté with his Scotch intelligence. Little things amused him: little themes were enough for him. His figures have "a parochial air." His early art was burdened by no message and was conscious of no dignity, and in it he discharged what must have seemed then his sufficient function—to amuse with the humours of humble life and the record of its facile happiness. But though his earlier pictures seem of so spontaneous and easy a conception, there had been needed to paint them the trained observation of an artist as well as the natural keenness of a shrewd witness of life. The *Blind Man's Buff*,* painted in 1811, is, in all save absolute exquisiteness of colour, as pretty a Genre picture as we may see. It is alive and a-sparkle: the tone harmonious; the composition finely ordered yet of apparent spontaneity, so that it does not suggest composition at all; the movements and gestures taken happily from the life; certain groups, as that of which the white-capped, yellow-skirted girl is the centre, being of the most ingenious invention

* National Gallery.

and the most pointed pourtrayal. In *The Village Festival*, too, we find a like amazing appropriateness of attitude and piquancy of pose—in the girl-child, for instance, with the bare shoulder-blades seen from behind, and in the well nigh Stothard-like grace of other young heroines of the same design.

No wonder these things were successful in popular engraving: they are so successful in story and in humour, in pointedness of expression and prettiness of line. Only the painter's particular gift of noble and pure colour was withheld from Wilkie. By what Fortune denied as well as by what she granted he was to be proved and recognised a Scotchman, and colour is not generally a Scotchman's gift. Wilkie is happiest with browns, with yellows that verge upon brown. Later he ventures upon red, but quite without a living Scotchman's exceptional triumph. He fails as conspicuously as Mr. Pettie succeeds. The oily reds with which Wilkie loaded his canvas, in his later time, and in juxtaposition with the heaviest blacks—as in *The First Earring*—produce an effect not noble, not even brilliant, but tawdry. One other limitation must be set to Wilkie's excellence in Genre painting—his other painting we are here fairly suffered to pass by—and that we find in the loss which is experienced

in his Genre work whenever his ambition pushes it to a scale too large for his theme. Even *The Village Festival* and *The Blind Fiddler* show something of the loss. *The First Earring* betrays the whole of it. The incident does not allow of such a scale: the moment it is not painted small it is seen to be trifling.

In England the succession of fine Genre painters who have joined the true artistic faculties to the possession of humour, has never been very sure or rich. But twenty years before the painter of the *Rent Day* died off the harbour of Malta—his death yet more remembered than his life, through the great picture which tells us of the passionate affection of Turner—there had risen and become conspicuous the third and last high English master of Genre—Charles Robert Leslie. Of all our humourists he was the most gentle and the most refined. Had he been a little coarser and louder he would have been much more popular with his own generation: had he had more of positive force and genius as an artist, he might legitimately have imposed himself upon ours. Unlike his very agreeable contemporary, Gilbert Stuart Newton, his art is more intellectual than sensuous—more thoughtful than purely picturesque.

As it is, enthusiasm is not a feeling he commonly evokes, and when, hardly ten years ago, what was meant to be a representative selection of his pictures was clustered together at Burlington House, the high comedy of Leslie's art passed very much without applause. In this there may have been something disappointing, there was but nothing that could fairly surprise. His very studied carefulness was almost incompatible with fertility: his delicate truth to the character he was depicting—to the silly gentleman of Shakspeare or the seductive widow of Sterne —was too subtle for popular favour; nor had popular favour been drawn by the bait of imitative reproduction of textures—a device Leslie was on the whole too simple to deliberately adopt.

And perhaps another reason why Leslie failed of hearty popularity is that he departed, and was among the first to depart, from depicting in Genre painting the follies and familiar scenes of his own day. He differed in this from Wilkie as he differed from Hogarth—as he differed also from the great Dutch masters. These sought their comedy only at their own doors and in the occurrences of their time. The departure from his own day—the placing of the painted drama in any age other than his own—while it invokes for the painter the associations of Romance and Lite-

rature, deprives him at once of the force of immediate interest, of the attraction of piquancy. Of such departure Leslie experienced both the gain and the loss. He gave us in *Sancho Panza*, in *Anne Page*, and *Sir Roger de Coverley*, the best of which he was capable: he gave it thoughtfully, in works which his diligence pursued without either haste or pause. His true gift was in the temperate pourtrayal of that gentle life he cared for—a gentle life endowed with the colours of Romance. He is the last link firmly added to the chain of Genre painters, for his successors are our contemporaries.

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